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(P. 147)

ART. II. — THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH.

ALMOST within our own day, the Christian world have come into possession of a new copy of the Pentateuch, little known out of a small circle of scholars. It is written in the Samaritan language, and appears to be wholly independent of the Hebrew, which we are accustomed to read in the Common Version of the Scriptures. They have come down to us through different channels; the Hebrew copy through the Jews, the descendants of the people who inhabited the ancient kingdom of Judah, and the Samaritan, through the Samaritans, the descendants of the people who inhabited the ancient kingdom of Israel. It is well known that, about five centuries after Moses' death, in the year 975 B. C, and in the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, the powerful empire of the Hebrews was dismembered, and separated into two kingdoms, — the kingdom of Judah, and the kingdom of Israel; the former, including the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who adhered to the party of (p. 148) Rehoboam, and appear in the history of later times under the name of Jews; the latter, the remaining ten tribes, who revolted under Jeroboam, and retained the ancient name of Israelites. The kingdom of Israel lasted, with some intervals of anarchy, through a period of two hundred and fifty-three years. The country was then conquered by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; the inhabitants were carried captive into Assyria and different parts of Media, and the Ten Tribes are never heard of more. In their place were substituted colonists from Babylon, Cutha, and other cities, who soon became incorporated with the common Israelites that were left in the land — for it appears they were not all carried into captivity. The whole of this mixed population of Israelites, Babylonians, and Cuthaeans was now comprehended under the general name of Samaritans, from Samaria, the capital city of the ancient kingdom; and it is by this name that they are afterwards known in history.

In the lapse of ages this once numerous and powerful people have gradually dwindled down to a few poor families, who still linger about the holy mountain, where their fathers worshipped. As a nation and as a peculiar religious sect, they are at the present day all but extinct. In their existing circumstances, there is nothing left to remind us of their former

prosperity and power. Their very name is well nigh blotted out from the memory of the living. In a few short years, and they will utterly disappear from the face of the earth, and be numbered among the nations that have passed away. Gibbon, speaking of them in the reign of Justinian, says they were "a motley race, an ambiguous sect, rejected as Jews by the Pagans, by the Jews as schismatics, and by the Christians as idolaters." After this period we meet with few traces in history of their separate national existence. Under the bloody persecutions of Justinian, twenty thousand of their number were slain, twenty thousand sold into captivity, and the handful that remained was soon scattered abroad among the nations. Rabbi Benjamin, in an Itinerary written seven hundred years ago, says that he found about four hundred at Damascus, three hundred at Ashkalon, two hundred at Caisarea in Palestine, and one hundred at Shechem. Scaliger says, that in his time they had Synagogues at Shechem, Jerusalem, Gaza, Cairo, and Damascus. Most of them lived then at Damascus. In 1697, Maundrell visited the Samaritans at Naplosa, or Naplous — the Shechem or Sychem of the Old Testament, and the Sychar of the New. (p. 149) It stands in a narrow valley between Mount Gerizim on the south, and Mount Ebal on the north, upon the former of which was built the ancient Samaritan temple. Maundrell describes this place as being then in a very mean condition compared with what it is represented to have been anciently. The chief priest of the Samaritans showed him a copy of their Pentateuch, but could not be persuaded to part with it upon any consideration. They still had a small temple on Mount Gerizim, whither they repaired at certain seasons to celebrate the rites of their religion; but what those rites were, he could not certainly learn. Naplosa appears to have become their chief place of residence in modern times, as being the seat of their ancient worship consecrated by the veneration of ages.

As much curiosity has of late years existed among the learned in Europe in regard to this extraordinary people, they have been frequently visited by more recent travellers. The latest and most satisfactory information we have seen as to their present state and their religious views and customs, is from our countryman, Mr. Stephens, in his "Incidents of Travel" in the Holy Land. According to him, there are now only about sixty Samaritan families left in the town of Naplosa. He stopped, while there, at the house of a Samaritan, where he tells us that, with one exception, he "was received, fed, and lodged better than in any other place in the Holy Land." He visited the Samaritan Synagogue, "a small room about fifteen feet square, with nothing striking or interesting about it, except what the Samaritans say is the oldest manuscript in the world, a copy of the Pentateuch," preserved in a tin case and described as "tattered and worn, and bearing the marks of extreme age" — a copy, about which they have a tradition, that it was written by Abishua, the grandson of Aaron, three years after the death of Moses. He entered freely into conversation with some of their number, particularly with an old man, the brother of his host. "This old man," says Mr. Stephens, "asked me many questions about the Samaritans in England, (of America he had no knowledge,) and seemed determined to believe that there were many in that country, and told me that I might say to them, wherever I found them, that there they believed in one omnipotent and eternal God, the five Books of Moses, and a future Messiah, and the day of the Messiah's coming to be near at hand; that they practised circumcision, went three times a year up to Mount Gerizim, 'the everlasting mountain,' to worship (p. 150) and offer sacrifice, and once a year pitched their tents and left their virgins alone on the mount for seven days, expecting that one of them would conceive and bring forth a son, who should be the Messiah; that

they allowed two wives, and in case of barrenness, four; that the women were not permitted to enter the Synagogue, except once a year during fast, but on no account were they permitted to touch the sacred scroll; and that, although the Jews and Samaritans had dealings in the market-places, &c., they hated each other now as much as their fathers did before them." There seems no reason to doubt the substantial correctness of this testimony in regard to the religious sentiments and practices, which prevail among the Samaritans.¹

As a race, the Samaritans have always kept themselves aloof from the Jews. To this day they scrupulously refuse all (p. 151) friendly intercourse and all reconciliation with their old hereditary enemies. At the same time it is worthy of observation, that, in common with the Jews, they have constantly cherished the expectation of a Messiah to come. And what is still more remarkable, they have never acknowledged the divine authority of any other Scriptures, than the Five Books of Moses. They have also in their hands defective copies of the books of Joshua and Judges, but do not allow them the same authority with the Pentateuch. It is a most interesting fact, too, in their religious history, that, through all the vicissitudes of their political condition, they have faithfully preserved among themselves the worship of the one true God. They have been generally distinguished for their ardent attachment to the law of Moses, a rigid adherence to its letter, and the strict observance of its rites. As a curious illustration of their attachment to the law, Dr. Huntington says, that, when he visited the Samaritans in the East, he met one of them with a manuscript copy of it hung round his neck, affectionately carrying it in his bosom.

The Samaritans of our Saviour's time appear to have been much more disposed to receive his instructions and acknowledge his claims, than the Jews were. The few incidental notices of them in the Gospels are all most interesting and strongly marked, as well as highly honorable to the national character. We need only allude to the beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan; to that memorable interview between our Lord and the woman of Samaria; to that scene of yet more affecting interest, which occurred at the miraculous cleansing of the ten lepers, only one of whom turned back to glorify God,

¹ Since writing the above, we have met with some further interesting notices of the present state of the Samaritans in the "Sketches of Oriental Religions" by Dr. Bowring of England. The reader will find them abridged in the March number of the "Monthly Miscellany of Religion and Letters." The following extracts may be compared with the account given by Stephens. "I found," says Dr. Bowring, "that the number of Samaritan families now living at Sychar is eleven, consisting of about one hundred and twenty persons." "Their numbers had at one period been reduced to as low as sixty individuals, but they were now somewhat on the increase." "They told me they had no positive information of any Samaritans except themselves." "The chief priest brought from the interior of the temple the ancient copy of the Pentateuch, which he assured me was the unpolluted original, and was three thousand, four hundred, and sixty years old. Its appearance is of a far higher antiquity, than any manuscript I have ever seen. It has been carefully and frequently repaired; it is in the old Samaritan character, and I found it was read with facility by himself and his descendants, and was habitually used in the service of the temple. But the language has ceased to be employed for colloquial purposes among the Samaritans, though they all professed to understand it." "There are four yearly festivals on Mount Gerizim, accompanied by religious ceremonies. At the principal one, the Passover, the whole body of Samaritans attend, and the Scribe told me it was a very imposing and interesting festivity, with much rejoicing and feasting, and songs and sports." "The Mahomedan Governor bore testimony to their general respectability. He said they were a quiet and a harmless people, and among the most trustworthy of the population of Naplous." "The Scribe was a man of mild and gentle manners, and I asked him what were the feelings of the Samaritans generally towards the Hebrews. 'We have no love to them in our hearts;' was his reply." There are some apparent discrepancies between the statements of Stephens and Bowring, which we know not how to reconcile.

"and he was a Samaritan." Indeed, in whatever light we look at this singular people, we cannot but regard their character and fortunes with more than ordinary interest, whether we contemplate them, as the feeble remnant of a once flourishing nation, who have survived the revolutions of empires, yet are destined ere long to utter extinction — as the only remaining descendants of the Ten Tribes of Israel — as the acknowledged conservators of a language written in characters known to be the oldest in the world, of which any remains are extant, and spoken by the patriarchs of old — as a religious body, who have always adhered to the worship of the one true God, and yet ever refused to acknowledge the authority of any Scriptures, but the Five Books of Moses — or finally, as a people, to whom the Christian world are indebted for a new text of the Pentateuch, (p. 152) believed to be the most ancient in existence, and written in the vernacular language of its author.

It is from these poor, scattered representatives of the ancient Samaritan nation, that about two centuries ago, a copy of their Pentateuch was first received in Europe, and at the same time, a Samaritan version, with which it should not be confounded. The one is an original copy of the Five Books of Moses in the old Samaritan character; the other a literal version of the same into the later Samaritan dialect. The Samaritan text, we may here take occasion to remark, is entirely free from vowel points and accents.

The first we hear of the Samaritan Pentateuch, in ancient times, is from those Christian Fathers, who applied themselves to the critical study of the Jewish Scriptures. The earliest direct testimony to its existence is found in the writings of Origen, at the beginning of the third century after Christ. In commenting upon Numbers xiii. 1, he says : — "In the beginning of Deuteronomy also, Moses records these things, which we have transferred from *the Hebrew copy of the Samaritans*." And again on Numbers xxi. 13: "These things also Moses mentions in the book of Deuteronomy which we found only in *the Samaritan copy*." Jerome, in his Prologue to the Book of Kings, says: "*The Samaritans write the Pentateuch of Moses with just as many letters, varying only in their angles and their forms,*" — that is, their alphabet contains the same number of letters with the Hebrew, (of which he had just been speaking,) the only difference being, that the Samaritan characters are not shaped like the Hebrew. And again, in commenting on Galatians iii. 10, he observed that a quotation made by Paul from Deuteronomy did not correspond with the Hebrew text — " On which account, he adds, reading over again *the Hebrew volumes of the Samaritans*, I found the word that was wanting." There are many similar allusions to this copy of the Pentateuch in the writings of Jerome. It is also cited or alluded to by Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Alexandria, Procopius of Gaza, Diodorus of Tarsus, and Syncellus. One of the old Greek Scholiasts has more numerous references to it, than are to be found in any other single writer.

Such are the unquestionable evidences, that the Pentateuch of the Samaritans was in the hands of the early Fathers. And now we are introduced to one of the most remarkable incidents in the history of sacred or profane literature. After so many of the (p. 153) Fathers had left on record their testimony to its existence, it fell into utter oblivion for more than a thousand years. Whether it was that they had only a copy or two, which they took no pains to have transcribed, because the Hebrew and the Septuagint were the manuscripts in common use — or, whether they quoted from a Greek version, which is now lost, as there are some reasons for believing — certain it is that, from the time of Jerome to the beginning of the seventeenth century, we find no traces in the history of

sacred criticism of its being extant among European Christians. No allusion is made to it by any Christian writer within that period. And when the common version of the Scriptures was made in 1611, our translators could not have availed themselves of it in their labors to improve the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch.

Down to the first quarter of the seventeenth century, then, the existence of the Samaritan copy was known only by the quotations of the Christian Fathers. As it had never been seen in modern times, or cited by any writer for about twelve hundred years, its very existence began to be called in question. At last it was suggested, that some copies of it might yet be preserved among the few Samaritan families in the East. To this point the attention of scholars was drawn at about the same time, as it happened, in England and France. In the year 1616, Pietro della Valle procured a complete copy from the Samaritans at Damascus; and, in 1623, it was presented to the Library of the Oratory at Paris by Achilles Harlay de Sancy, then minister from France to Constantinople, and afterwards Bishop of St. Malo. It was first described by John Morin in the preface to his edition of the Roman text of the Septuagint (Paris, 1628); and afterwards more at length in his "*Exercitationes Ecclesiasticas in utrumque Samaritanorum Pentateuchum*" (Paris, 1631). In 1641 was published the Paris Polyglot; and here Father Morin printed the first edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch, with its version, from a single manuscript, that, namely, which had been purchased at Damascus by Delia Valle.

In the mean time, English scholars began to be interested in the same subject. As early as the year 1559, Joseph Scaliger had opened a correspondence with the Samaritans at Naplosa, and obtained some new information in regard to their numbers and circumstances. He complained to the learned men of his day of the sad indifference of European Christians, who year (p. 154) after year travelled to Palestine without bringing home a copy of the Pentateuch, which was now known to be extant among the Samaritans there. His complaints were long disregarded. At length, some time between the years 1620 and 1630, at his earnest recommendation, Archbishop Usher succeeded in obtaining six copies from the East. Five of these are still preserved in different English Libraries; the sixth, which the Archbishop presented to Ludovicus de Dieu, appears to have been lost. In 1621, a copy was brought to Italy, and is now in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. About the same time, Peiresc purchased three additional copies; two of which are in the Royal Library at Paris, and the other in the Library of Barberini at Rome. To these copies others have since been added; so that Kennicott, near the middle of the last century, had sixteen manuscripts to compare together, most of them, however, more or less defective. There is also known to be a copy of great antiquity at Naplosa, which, in the year 1690, was examined by Dr. Huntington, and then said to be about five hundred years old. Attempts have been made to purchase this manuscript of the Samaritans, but without success. In August, 1734, Mr. John Usgate, in a letter to a friend at Oxford, dated from Acre, writes, — that he had been at Naplosa the preceding February; that several families of the Samaritans then resided there, and had still their old manuscript of the Pentateuch, some passages of which were so effaced as to be scarce legible; that he had made proposals, and hoped soon to agree with the Samaritans for the purchase of it, of which, he adds, he would send his friend notice. But no such notice was ever received, the purchase having been prevented by the death of Mr. Usgate, who, soon after the date of this letter, was assassinated by a party of Persians. This appears to have been the same manuscript, that was seen by Maundrell, and more recently by Stephens and Dr.

Bowring, said by the Samaritans to be the oldest in the world. If it be the same, it doubtless remains at Naplosa to this day.

In 1657, Walton introduced the Samaritan Pentateuch into his London Polyglot, with emendations of the text as published in the Paris edition. In 1790, Dr. Blayney published an edition of it at Oxford in Hebrew characters.²

(p. 155) Such is the history in brief of this copy of the Pentateuch, since it was brought from the East to Europe. And here the first question, which naturally suggests itself to the mind, is, how do we know it to be a copy of the same text with that lost one, which was in the hands of the Fathers in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era? All doubts on this point have been put to rest by the exact correspondence of our present copies with the citations made by the Fathers. In comparing the quotations of the Fathers from the Hebrew with the modern Hebrew text, considerable discrepancies are not unfrequently detected. But with such care have the Samaritans transcribed their manuscripts, that these are found to contain all the citations made more than a thousand years before, and in the very words, in which they then were made. Precisely the same agreements and differences, too, between the Hebrew and Samaritan texts, which the ancients noticed as existing in their day, are found between our present copies of the Hebrew and Samaritan. There can remain no doubt, then, that the manuscripts anciently in use, which the Fathers had from the Samaritans of their time, were transcripts of the same text, that was brought from the East in the seventeenth century; and thus it is clearly traced back to the beginning of the third century after Christ.

And further; from that memorable conversation between our Saviour and the woman of Samaria, recorded in the Gospels, may we not gather hints of its existence among the Samaritans of Naplosa, (or Sychar, as it was then called,) at the commencement of the Christian era? The narrative in the fourth chapter of John furnishes abundant evidence, that this Samaritan woman, in common with her countrymen, confidently expected the coming of a Messiah. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ;" and when, upon her glowing representations of his supernatural powers, her townsmen of Sychar were persuaded to come and see the man, who had told her all things that ever she did, they believed and said; "Now we believe — we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ." Thus (156) we find the expectation of a Messiah to come prevailing then as extensively among the Samaritans as among the Jews; but whence was it derived? Not from intercourse with the Jews; for the Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans, nor the Samaritans with them; neither would they have borrowed a fundamental doctrine of their religion from their most deadly enemies. Not from the writings of the Prophets; for they did not acknowledge the divine authority of any Scriptures, but the Five Books of Moses. These, then, must have been in their hands, or they never would have looked for the appearance of that greater Prophet, which was to be raised up, like unto Moses.

² With regard to the age of the Samaritan manuscripts, it cannot be satisfactorily settled at this day. There are no sufficient data, on (footnote cont'd on next page) which to ground a decisive judgment. With the exception of the remarkable copy so long preserved among the Samaritans of Naplosa, allowed on all hands to be of very high antiquity, probably none of the manuscripts extant date farther back, than the tenth century of the Christian era. One, however, Kennicott assigns to the eighth century. Most of them are supposed to be of much more recent origin.

From these various testimonies, it may safely be inferred, that the Samaritans had their copy of the Pentateuch as early as the time of our Saviour—a copy, which, without going further, it would be fair to presume, had come down to them from the infancy of their nation, just as another copy had been handed down among the Jews. But if it be an independent copy of the Law, it must date nearly a thousand years still farther back, than the period to which we have hitherto traced it. At what time, then, and from what source did the Samaritans receive it? These are the most important inquiries, which now come up for our consideration; but, as they have met with many different answers, it may be well to say a word first in relation to the history of opinions on the subject under discussion.

No sooner had a copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch come to light, than a warm controversy arose among European critics as to its true origin and character. On the one hand, it was treated with contempt, as a comparatively modern and worthless transcript from the Jewish text, wilfully corrupted by the Samaritans; while, on the other, it was esteemed a treasure of inestimable value to the Church, as being an independent copy of the Law, which had descended from the most ancient times. It does not fall within our present purpose to detail all the various opinions, that have been held with regard to its date and its proper authority in settling the text of the Pentateuch. The main point in dispute, however, has been— whether it be of Israelitish origin, and so an original copy of the Law, independent of the Hebrew, or a mere transcript from the Jewish, made by the Samaritans in later times. And it is upon the decision of this question, that almost its entire value may be said to depend.

(p. 157) Father Morin — the same, who published the first edition of it that was printed in Europe — began the controversy in his "*Exercitationes Ecclesiasticæ in utrumque Samaritanorum Pentateuchum.*" He came to the conclusion, that the modern Samaritan text was derived from copies existing among the Ten Tribes before the Separation, and yet had been preserved singularly free from corruption. Cappell in his "*Critica Sacra,*" and Walton in his "*Prolegomena*" to the London Polyglot, both followed in the steps of Morin. In the mean time, Morin's theory was warmly opposed by Hottinger, Leusden, Stephen Morin, and the younger Buxtorf. Father Simon and LeClerc gave the world their views on the questions at issue between the critics. The controversy was afterwards revived by Houbigant in his "*Prolegomena.*" Houbigant, who adopted Morin's theory, was answered by S. Ravius in his "*Exercitationes Philologicæ*" On the same side with Houbigant appeared A. S. Aquilinus in a learned treatise entitled "*Pentateuchi Hebræo-Samaritani Præstantia in illustrando et emendando Textu Masorethico ostensa.*" The theological scholars of Germany have entered into the controversy with their characteristic ardor, and, as was to be expected, arrived at very different conclusions. Among the most conspicuous may be mentioned the names of Michaelis, Bertholdt, Bauer, Jahn, Eichhorn, and Gesenius. Eichhorn may be considered a fair representative of those, who agree with Morin in regard to the Israelitish origin of the Samaritan copy. At the head of the opposite party, who assign it a more modern date, may be ranked Gesenius, who attacked the positions of Eichhorn and others in an elaborate treatise, published in 1815, and entitled "*De Pentateuchi Samaritani Origine, Indole, et Auctoritate.*"

In English almost nothing has been written concerning the claims of this Pentateuch. Prideaux, in his *Connection*, has given a few pages to the subject. Archbishop Usher

suggested the theory of its having been compiled from a Hebrew and a Greek copy by Dositheus, a heretic of the first century, who at the same time corrupted the text. But there is so little foundation for this hypothesis, that critics since have hardly deemed it worthy a serious consideration. Whiston and Alexander Geddes have both maintained the equal or superior authority of the Samaritan text. But by far its ablest defender in England, (unless we ought to except Walton) has been Kennicott (p. 158) in various works, particularly in a Dissertation to be found in his second volume on the Hebrew Text.³

In reviewing the history of this controversy, it is easy to see that the discussion has not always been carried on in that calm and candid and liberal spirit of philosophy, without which no critical investigations can lead to any useful results. There appears, on the part of some who embarked in the contest, a strong but unjustifiable reluctance to admit the independent authority of the Samaritan copy. They still retained the old, superstitious veneration for *the Hebrew verity*, as the Jewish text was wont to be styled — a veneration, which they could not be supposed willing to transfer, without a struggle, to a new text, but just introduced to the notice of the Christian world, and found to differ considerably from the Hebrew.⁴ And if, while the Samaritan differed from the Hebrew, it was allowed to be as ancient and valuable, as it was represented, it would follow that some errors existed in the Hebrew; here, then, would be another awkward stumbling block in the way of (p. 159) those, who still adhered to the popular doctrine in regard to the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Besides, since Christianity grew out of Judaism, and as it is to the Jews that we owe our Scriptures of the Old Testament, some would think it wanting in respect to God's chosen people and the sacred record of His revelations to them, to acknowledge the independent, perhaps superior authority of a copy of the Law received through the Samaritans, the ancient and implacable enemies of the Jews. These various considerations appear to have exercised an unfavorable influence upon the tone of some of the earlier inquiries into the origin and character of the Samaritan copy. And more recently, the German critics, who have taken hold of the subject, have many of them naturally hesitated to adopt a theory in regard to the antiquity of this copy, which it would be found impossible to reconcile with their views of the

³ The reader, who may wish to consult the original authorities for the leading facts stated in this Essay, will find them in the following works :—

Walton's Prolegomena to the London Polyglot, Cap. xi.; Kennicott on the Hebrew Text, Vol. II. ; Whiston's Essay on the True Text of the Old Testament; Eichhorn's Einleitung in das Alte Testament, B. II., pp. 132-177; Simon's Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament, pp. 63 - 83; Houbigant's Prolegomena, Tom. II., pp. 121-188; and the Dissertations on the Samaritan Letters in the Third "Volume of Calmet's large Dictionary.

⁴ As a good specimen of the manner in which the Samaritan Pentateuch was first received in Europe by critics of the old school, who obstinately clung to their cherished idea of the absolute integrity of the Jewish text, we quote the following from Houbigant's Prolegomena. We give the passage in the original Latin, as a literary curiosity, and for fear it might lose some of its spirit by any translation of ours.

"Videres alios," says Houbigant, "Samaritanas illas membranas religiose aversari, atque ab Hebraicæ Linguae Candidatis longe arcere, alios irate aspicere, furere, bacchari. Nam, ut ferunt Indicas aves, si cujus de grege illarum nigro collo album quid per lusum alligaveris, ea teras earn iratis oculis aspicere, atque in earn rauco clangore impetum facere, sic illi *Samaritanum Pentateuchum*, Hodiernis Codicibus non nihil discolorem quem viderent, agebant, rapiebant, discerpebant, clamoribus miris calumniisque proscindebant Tales fuere *Taylor et Boolius*, qui in *Morinum* furiata mente exarserunt. Talis etiam Junior *Buxtorfius*, qui eum Pentateuchum vocabat *exoticum et profanum*."

comparatively modern compilation of the Books of Moses. The questions involved in this discussion cannot be considered as settled yet. To the present day there continues no little difference of opinion on the subject among scholars of high repute. One thing, however, is certain; a vast majority of the biblical critics, whose opinions carry much weight with them, have gradually settled down in the theory first advanced by Father Morin, namely, that the Samaritan Pentateuch is an original copy of the law, which has come down to us from the Revolt of the Ten Tribes. And after the most careful investigation, we are firmly persuaded this is the theory, in which the whole theological world will finally acquiesce.

The theory of Morin, we said; but it is not a *mere* theory unsupported by facts. In the absence of direct historical testimony, it stands on the most solid grounds, which the nature of the case admits. It affords an easy and satisfactory solution of some extraordinary phenomena, which on any other hypothesis are inexplicable.

Nothing but the existence of the Pentateuch among the Samaritans from the infancy of their nation will explain the most striking circumstances in their religious history. If they always had the Law in their hands, we see how it is that they never lost the worship of the true God. But, on any other hypothesis, whence, we ask, was derived their national religion, and why was it not soon overwhelmed by the superstitions of the neighboring nations? If then it shall appear, that they (p. 160) *have* always preserved among themselves their national worship, as we believe they have, it will follow that they have also had from the first a copy of the Law, upon which that worship is founded. The argument applies to the Samaritans with as much force, as to the Jews. No religious institutions will long retain their influence over the common mind, unless associated with the Sacred Books, to which they owe their establishment and authority. Suppose we should hear of a new island having just been discovered in some unexplored corner of the earth, an island, whose inhabitants were found to be a Christian people, and to have been so for more than a thousand years; should we not say at once, they must have had copies of the New Testament among them all that time? Now if the Samaritans have always kept up their national worship, their history presents a case full as strong, if not stronger. For they were an uncultivated people, over whose minds it would hardly be possible for any system of religion to retain its power long without some Holy Scriptures, which were held in reverence to keep alive their interest in things sacred. Still more, they were a people peculiarly liable to fall into idolatry, descended as they were from ancestors partly idolatrous, and surrounded as they were by idolatrous nations.

To place the matter in as clear a light as possible, we will suppose an imaginary line to be drawn, dividing the Samaritan history into two distinct periods; the period before, and the period since the Christian era. We know that, since the time of Christ, they have had copies of the Law amongst them; and we know, too, that during the same period they have observed the worship and the rites" peculiar to their faith. And why? Why, but because they have all that time had copies of the Law, in which that worship and those rites are enjoined? Now, is not the presence of the same Law in their hands from the first just as necessary to account for the preservation of the same worship and the same rites amongst them during the long period of their national existence before the Christian era? Nay, is it not much more so, in view of their greater exposure to idolatrous influences then? And if it shall appear, that they had a copy of the Pentateuch from the beginning, it must also have been substantially the same with that, which was extant among them in our Saviour's time. For it will not be pretended, if they had a copy at first, that it was

another copy, and not the one they had then, which has come down (p. 161) to their descendants. The question that remains to be settled, then, is reduced to one of simple historical fact. *Have* the Samaritans always continued in the worship of the true God according to the institution of Moses? If so, we repeat, they must always have had their copy of the Pentateuch.

As we proceed to trace back the Samaritan history through the ages before Christ, the epoch, which stands out with most prominence, is the period when the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity, about the year 536 B. C.; and we find the worship of Jehovah had then long prevailed among the Samaritans. For when the Jews, upon their return from exile, began to rebuild their temple, the Samaritans offered to unite with them, alleging that they worshipped God after the same manner with the Jews; as we learn from Ezra, iv. 1, and following: "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the Fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you; *for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon, King of Assur, which brought us up hither.*" The narrative informs us, not only that they were then devoted to the worship of the God of Israel, but how long they had been so; ever since the days of the Assyrian King, Esarhaddon, that is, about one hundred and eighty years before this, or 713 B. C, just after the commencement of their history as a separate people. All this time, too, they must have preserved the Mosaic Law, as the foundation of their worship; and here we ought to add, there is no pretence of its having been lost in the period which elapsed between the return of the Jews from their captivity and the Christian era.

In the seventeenth Chapter of the second Book of Kings, where we find given a detailed account of the captivity of the Israelites, and the substitution of Assyrian colonists in their place, we learn how the Samaritans happened to come into possession of the Law at the time specified. We read, 2 Kings, xvii. 27, and following: "Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither (into Samaria) one of the priests, whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. Then one of the priests, whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught (p. 162) them how they should fear the Lord." At this time, then, the Samaritans must have received their copy of the Pentateuch from one of the Israelitish priests, who had just before been carried captive from the kingdom of Israel into Assyria. For it is incredible that a single priest should have been sent to teach "the manner of the God of the land" to the whole Samaritan nation, and "how they should fear the Lord," too, without some copies of the Law to distribute among the people, — that Law, which he was to teach, and by whose sanctions he was to enforce his teachings. It would be as unlikely, as for us to send a Christian missionary to convert the Heathen, without the Bible in his hands.⁵

⁵ In opposition to the view we have taken as to the manner, in which the Samaritans first came into possession of their Pentateuch, it has been argued, that there is no need of supposing the Israelitish priest to have carried copies of the Law with him into Samaria, because he *might*, after all, have taught them the Law *orally*; and the probability that he did so, it is said, is increased by the fact, that the new inhabitants of the land, who had taken the place of the Israelites, were ignorant of the language, in which the Law was written, and continued so down to the time of Ezra.

That they were unacquainted with the old Hebrew for some time after they came from Assyria, is likely. How long this state of things continued, must be left to conjecture; but there is no evidence of its having

(p. 163) But here it will be said, many of the kings of Israel are known to have been idolaters; have we any reason, then, to believe that the worship of God according to the institution of Moses was preserved among the Ten Tribes from the period of their Revolt, about two hundred and sixty years before? That idolatry did prevail amongst them to a considerable extent, must be admitted ; but, in respect to this, three things are to be observed. It was not *pure* idolatry; it was at no time *universal*; and it was not *peculiar* to the Israelites.

It was not *pure* idolatry, but a mixture of idol-worship with the worship of Jehovah. Before the Separation, there is no doubt, the worship of God was preserved among all the Twelve Tribes. And when, at the time of the Separation, Jeroboam set up the golden calves in the kingdom of Israel, they were plainly intended by him to be worshipped as images of Jehovah. "They were not, strictly speaking, idols," says Milman, "but were speciously contrived as symbolical representations, probably preserving some resemblance to the Cherubim, of which the ox was one of the four constituent parts." It was not so much the object of Jeroboam to seduce his people to idolatry, as to keep them from going up to Jerusalem to worship, lest they should return to their allegiance to the house of David. It was chiefly this mixed worship, partly Jewish and partly (p. 164) idolatrous, which prevailed at different times among the Ten Tribes. — Again ; idolatry was at no time *universal*. There is evidence, that not even in this qualified sense were the people ever all of them idolaters. Even in the reign of Ahab, who did more than any other king of Israel to extend idolatry, there were seven thousand, who had not bowed the knee

lasted till the time of Ezra. It must be remembered, in this connexion, that the Israelites were not all carried into captivity, and that those, who were left behind, might for a time easily have acted as scribes. The Assyrian colonists must soon have become incorporated with the Israelites that remained; and would there be any thing strange in their learning the Israelitish language, especially as it was the language, through which they were to be made acquainted with the obligations of a new faith and a new worship? If an American should go to France to spend the rest of his days there, it is to be presumed that he would not long neglect to learn the French language; and he would be in a position nearly the same with that of the Assyrian colonists among the Israelites. Besides, it appears from the history in the second Book of Kings, that they themselves *applied* to the king of Assyria for an Israelitish priest to teach them the manner of the God of the land; hence they would be so much the more anxious to learn the language, in which the Law was written.

With regard to the Israelitish priest having taught them *orally*, we must admit its *possibility*, if the priest had been well instructed in the Law. But the *probabilities*, as we have seen, are all on the other side of the question. It is clear that, without the written Law in their hands, — the Law, upon which their worship of Jehovah was founded, — they must have relapsed into idolatry very soon, in three or four generations at farthest. Yet there is no (cont'd on next page) evidence, that they ever did become idolaters afterwards. We hear, indeed, of their having had a mixed worship for some time; they both "feared the Lord, and served their graven images," we are told in the second Book of Kings. And yet even this story of their serving graven images may be only a Jewish calumny, suggested by the fact of their having been idolaters originally. We know that a calumny of the same nature about the Samaritans has been handed down among the Jews, and, through them, among Christians, almost to our own times. Maundrell, for instance, in 1697, says, that he could not then ascertain what the religious rites of the Samaritans were, but, he adds, " that *their religion consists in the adoration of a calf, as the Jews give out*, seems to have more of spite than of truth in it." The story of their worshipping a calf was derived probably from the idol-calves, which their Israelitish ancestor, Jeroboam, is known to have introduced. We would not unnecessarily offend the prejudices of any, who may believe in the inspiration of every chapter and verse in the Old Testament; but, it must be confessed there are some things about the early history of the Samaritans, as we have it from the Jews, which look fabulous; particularly, the story of God's sending lions amongst them to destroy them for their idolatry, before they had so much as an opportunity to learn the worship of Jehovah.

to Baal, as we learn from 1 Kings, xix. 18. And under several of the kings more piously disposed, idolatry was altogether abolished, and the greater part of the people must then have been worshippers of the true God. — Again; idolatry was not *peculiar* to the Israelites. Some of the kings of Judah, as well as of Israel, are known to have favored idolatry. And how often in the course of Jewish history do we find the people themselves forsaking the God of their fathers! Indeed, the unaccountable proneness of the Jews to relapse into idolatry is one of the most marked traits in their national character. Yet, notwithstanding all this, it is commonly acknowledged that, as a nation, they have always preserved among themselves the worship of Jehovah in some form more or less pure. Why then, because the Israelites often fell into idolatry, is it therefore to be inferred that, as a body, they, any more than the Jews, must have lost the worship of the true God? It will never do to argue from the occasional practice of idolatry among a people, that therefore they have no law in their hands forbidding idolatry. It is also worthy of remark, in this connexion, that the history of the Israelites has come down to us only through the Jews, who, we may suppose, would not be likely to represent the religious character of their avowed enemies in a light too favorable.

But there are still clearer indications, that the worship of Jehovah, and hence the law which taught that worship, were never wholly lost among the Ten Tribes. We know that from time to time many eminent prophets were raised up amongst them. There were Ahijah, Micaiah, Elijah, and Elisha; how could they have enforced their reproofs of idolatry and sin, without some divine Law commonly acknowledged, to which they all appealed for authority? There was a *school* of the Prophets at Bethel; must not the book of the Law have been taught there? The tribe of Levi was scattered through the other twelve tribes, to be maintained by the offerings of their brethren. But what could so many of the Levites, as must have been left with the ten tribes, have done without a copy of the (p. 165) Mosaic Law, — the Law, upon whose authority alone they founded their claim to the possession of certain cities, and depended even for a maintenance? And if the people were not yet in possession of the Law, what mean those words in 2 Kings, xvii. 13, and following: "Yet the Lord testified against Israel by all the prophets, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and *keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the Law, which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets* "? Again in xviii. 12, it is assigned as the cause of the captivity of the Ten Tribes, that "they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but *transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded.*" And again in x. 31, it is said of one of the kings of Israel, that he "took no heed to *walk in the Law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart;*" but would he be expected to walk by a Law, that had never been given him? ⁶

Such are some of the most satisfactory testimonies we have to the existence of the Mosaic Law among the Ten Tribes, during the whole period of their separate national existence. Now, copies of this Law, which had come down from the time of the Separation, must have gone with them into their captivity. Some of these must have been in the hands of that; Israelitish priest, who was sent to Samaria by the king of Assyria, to teach the inhabitants the manner of the God of Israel; for, it appears, the first settlers there

⁶ We may also add, that the prophets Hosea and Amos, whose writings are included within our canon of Scripture, in all probability lived among the Ten Tribes; and we find them both often appealing to the Mosaic Law, to give authority to their instructions.

were idolaters, and wished to be instructed in the worship of Jehovah. And it is, doubtless, the copies of the Pentateuch thus introduced among the Samaritans, which were the originals of all the successive transcripts down to the present day. In a future number, we shall resume and complete our argument.
T.W.

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