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**The History of the Jews  
From the Earliest Period Down to Modern Times.**

By **Henry Hart Milman, D.D.**  
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(p. 61).....This was the great revolution in their state: from followers of a different religion they were degraded into heretics; and the name of heretic implied all that was odious and execrable to the popular ear; all that was rebellious to civil and ecclesiastical authority. It was a crime to be put down by the rigour of the law—and the law put forth its utmost rigour at the hands of the ruling power. In the sixth year of Justin the Elder, a law was promulgated to the following effect:—Unbelievers, heathens, Jews, and Samaritans, (p. 62) shall henceforth undertake no office of magistracy, nor be invested with any dignity in the state; neither be judges, nor prefects, nor guardians of cities, lest they may have an opportunity of punishing or judging Christians and even bishops. They must be likewise excluded from all military functions. In case of the breach of this law, all their acts are null and void, and the offender shall be punished by a fine of twenty pounds of gold. This law, which comprehends Samaritans as well as Jews, leads us to the curious fact of the importance attained by that people during the reigns of Justin and Justinian.<sup>1</sup> Hitherto their petty religious republic seems to have lurked in peaceful insignificance. Now, not only do its members appear dispersed along the shores of the Mediterranean, sharing the commerce with their Jewish brethren in Egypt, Italy, and Sicily, but the peace of the empire was disturbed by their fierce and frequent insurrections in Palestine. Already in the preceding reign, that of Zeno, their city of Sichem, which had now assumed the name of Neapolis (Naplous), had been the scene of a sanguinary tumult, of which we have only the Christian narrative—the rest must be made up, in some degree, from conjecture. The Samaritans still possessed their sacred mountain of Gerizim, on which they duly paid their devotions. No stately Temple rose on the summit of the hill, but the lofty height was consecrated by the (p. 63)  
A.C. 493-530. THEIR EXPULSION FROM GERIZIM.

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<sup>1</sup> A curious law (Cod. Theodos. xiii. v. 18) had united the Jews and Samaritans in the privilege or the exemption from serving in the corn-ships which supplied Constantinople. This seems to have been the function of the Navicularii in question in this law, and probably applied to the Jews and Samaritans in Alexandria, where they coexisted in the time of Hadrian. The greater part, as poor and employed in petty trade (inopes, vilibusque commerciis occupati), were to be exempt; the men of substance (idonei facultatibus) were not to be excused from this public duty.

eneration of ages.<sup>2</sup> It is not improbable that the Christians, who were always zealously disposed to invade the sanctuary of unbelief, and to purify, by the erection of a church, every spot which had been long profaned by any other form of worship, might look with holy impatience for the period when a fane in honour of Christ should rise on the top of Mount Gerizim. The language of our Lord to the woman of Samaria, according to their interpretation, prophetically foreshowed the dedication of that holy mountain to a purer worship. No motive can be suggested so probable as the apprehension of such a design, for the furious, and, as we are told, unprovoked attack of the Samaritans on the Christian church in Naplous. They broke in on Whit Sunday—slew great numbers—seized the Bishop Terebinthus in the act of celebrating the Holy Eucharist—wounded him—cut off several of his fingers, as they clung with pious tenacity to the consecrated emblems, which the invaders misused with such sacrilegious and shameless fury as a Christian dare not describe. The bishop fled to Constantinople, appeared before the Emperor, showed his mutilated hands, and at the same time reminded him of our Lord's prophecy. Zeno commanded the offenders to be severely punished, expelled the Samaritans from Gerizim; and the Christians had at length the satisfaction of beholding a chapel to the Virgin on the peak of the holy mountain, surrounded by a strong wall of brick, where, however, a watch was constantly kept to guard it from the Sama-

(p. 64) REBELLION IN SAMARIA

ritans. During the reign of Auastasius, some Zealots, led by a woman, clambered up the steep side of the precipice, reached the church, and cut the guard to pieces. They then cried out to their countrymen below to join them; but the timid Samaritans refused to hearken to their call; and Procopius of Edessa, the governor, a man of prudence and decision, allayed the tumult by the punishment of the offenders. This chapel was still further strengthened by Justinian; and five other churches, destroyed by the Samaritans, rebuilt.<sup>3</sup>

The rankling animosity between the two religions—aggravated, no doubt, by the intolerant laws of Justinian, hereafter to be noticed—broke out in a ferocious, though desperate insurrection. It originated in a collision between the Jews and Samaritans, and the Christians; many houses were burned by the Samaritans. Justinian, enraged at the misconduct of the Prefect Bassus, deposed him, and ordered his head to be cut off on the spot. A certain Julian, by some reported to have been a robber chieftain, appeared at the head of the Samaritans. He assumed, it is averred, the title of King, and even had some pretensions to the character of a Messiah. All around Naplous they wasted the possessions of the Christians with fire and sword, burned the churches, and treated the priests with the most shameless indignities. By one account Julian is said to have entered Naplous while the games were celebrating. The victor was named Nicias; he had won the prize from the Jewish and Samaritan charioteers. Julian demanded his religion, and on his reply that he was a

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<sup>2</sup> Procopius, *De >Edificiis*, v. 7.

Procopius ignorantly asserts that there never had been a Temple on Gerizim. He also strangely misrepresents the words of Christ, which he cites as if predicting that the true worshippers (the Christians) should worship on Gerizim. This leads to the notion that the Christians were contemplating the building a church there.

<sup>3</sup> Vit . S. *Sabae*. Joann. Malala, p. 446, Kdit. Bonn. ; Theophan. i. p. 274. Compare *Le Beau*, viii. 118.

(p. 65) A.C. 530. SUPPRESSION OF THE REBELLION

Christian, instead of conferring the crown upon him, had his head struck off. The whole district was a desert; one bishop had fallen in the massacre, and many priests were thrown into prison or torn in pieces. A great force was sent into the province; and, after a bloody battle, the Samaritans were defeated, Julian slain, and Silvanus, the most barbarous enemy of the Christians, taken, and put to death. One, however, of the insurgents, named Arsenius, found his way to Constantinople. He was a man of great eloquence and ability, and succeeded in convincing the Emperor, who was usually entirely under the priestly influence, as well as the Empress, that the Christians were the real authors of this insurrection. The ecclesiastics of Palestine were seized with amazement and terror at the progress of this man—whom they characterize as " a crafty and wicked liar "—in the favour of the Emperor. They had recourse to St. Sabas, and induced him to undertake a mission to Constantinople in their defence. The venerable age (he was ninety years old) and the sanctity of Sabas triumphed over, it may be feared, the reason and justice of Arsenius. The Samaritans were condemned; the leaders of the insurrection adjudged to death; the rest of the people expelled, and interdicted from settling again in Naplous; and, by a strange edict, the Samaritans were no longer to inherit the property of their fathers. Arsenius himself bowed to the storm, and embraced Christianity: many of the Samaritans, at the preaching of Sabas, or more probably to secure their property to their children, followed his example, or pretended to do so, with hypocrisy which may offend, but cannot surprise. The Emperor offered magnificent presents to Sabas; the holy man rejected every personal advantage; but re-

(p. 66) LAWS OF JUSTINIAN

quested a remission of taxes for his brethren, whose fields had been wasted, and property burned, in the recent tumults.

This apparent success in converting the great part of an obstinate race of unbelievers to the true faith, with some other events of the same nature, no doubt encouraged Justinian in his severe legislative enactments against the Jews and Samaritans. These nations were confounded with the recreant or disobedient sons of the Church, the heretics: they were deprived of all civil dignities, and at the same time compelled to undertake the offices attached to those dignities. Every burthen of society was laid upon them; but the honour and distinction which should be the inseparable rewards of such public services were sternly denied. They might be of the Curia, but the law which made sacred the person of the Curiales, and made it a crime to strike them, to put them to the torture, to exile them, had no application to the Jew, the Samaritan, or the heretic.<sup>4</sup> The proselyting zeal which dictated the constitutions of Justinian entered into the bosom of families, under the specious pretext of securing Christian converts from the unwarrantable exercise of the parental authority. Either supposing that the law which forbade the intermarriages of Samaritans or Jews with Christians was perpetually eluded, or providing for the case of one party becoming a convert while the other adhered to his faith, Justinian enacted that among parents of different religions, the chief authority should rest with the true religion. In defiance of the father, the children were to be under the care of the mother; and the father could not, on the ground of religion, refuse either a maintenance or

(p. 67) A.C. 528-531. RESPECTING JEWS AND SAMARITANS.

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<sup>4</sup> Nov. Constit. 45., C. 1.

his necessary expenses to the child.<sup>5</sup> "Unbelieving parents, who have no other well-grounded cause of complaint against their believing children, are bound to leave them their property, to afford them a maintenance, to provide them with all necessaries, to marry them to true believers, to bestow on them dowries and bridal presents according to the decree of the prefect or the bishop." Further, the true believing children of unbelieving parents, if those children have been guilty of no act of delinquency towards their parents, shall receive that share of their inheritance, undiminished, which would have fallen to them if their parents had died intestate; and every will made in contravention of this regulation is declared null and void. If they have been guilty of any delinquency, they may be indicted and punished; but even then they have a right to a fourth part of the property.<sup>6</sup>

The above edict included both Jews and Samaritans: in the following, an invidious distinction was made. In litigations between Christians and Jews, or Christians among each other, the testimony of a Jew or a Samaritan was inadmissible: in the litigations of Jews among each other, the Jew's testimony was valid; that of a Samaritan as of a Manichean of no value. Another statute enacted that the synagogues of the Samaritans should be destroyed, and that whoever attempted to rebuild them should be severely punished. The Samaritans were entirely deprived of the right of bequeathing their property: only true believers might presume to administer to the effects of a heretic, whether he died with or without a will. Thus no Samaritan had more than a life interest in his property; unless his son was

(p. 68) Milder Decree of Justinian.

an apostate, it was for ever alienated, and went to a stranger, or to the imperial treasury. No Samaritan might bear any office, neither teach nor plead in courts of law: impediments were even placed in the way of his conversion; if he conformed in order to obtain an office, he was obliged to bring his wife and children with him to the church. Not merely could he not bequeath, he could not convey property to an unbeliever; if he did so, it was confiscated to the treasury. The children of mixed marriages must be believers, or forfeit their inheritance; or where this was partly the case, the unbelieving children were excluded. "The true believers alone inherit: if none are members of the Church, it passes to the nearest relations; in default of these, to the treasury. The Prefects and Bishops are to enforce these statutes in their respective districts, and the infringement of them is to be punished by the severest penalties." These cruel statutes—which sowed dissension in the bosom of every family, caused endless litigations among the nearest relatives, almost offered a premium on filial disobedience, and enlisted only the basest motives on the side of true religion—were either too flagrantly iniquitous to be put in execution, or shocked the cooler judgement of the Imperial legislator.

A decree was issued a few years after, modifying these enactments, but in such a manner as perhaps might tempt the sufferers to quote, if they had dared, the sentence of their own wise king, "The tender mercies of wicked men are cruel." In this edict, after some pompous self-adulation on his own clemency, Justinian declared, that on account of the good conduct of the Samaritans, attested by Sergius, Bishop of Caesarea, who, to his honour, seems to have interposed

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<sup>5</sup> Cod. Just. i. v. 12. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 13.1.

(p. 69) A.C. 531-555. FRESH INSURRECTION IN CAESAREA.

in their behalf, the rigour of the former laws was mitigated. The Samaritans were permitted to make wills, to convey property, to manumit slaves, to transact all business with each other. It abandoned all claims of the treasury upon their property; but it retained the following limitation, " because it was just that Christian heirs should have some advantage over unbelievers." Where part of the family had embraced Christianity, and the father died intestate, the children who were true believers inherited to the exclusion of the rest. But in case the latter, at a subsequent period, were converted, they were reinstated in their inheritance, with the loss only of the interest of those years during which they remained obstinate. Where the father made a will, the unbelieving heirs could not claim more than a sixth part; the rest could only be obtained, as above, by the change of their religion. A deceitful peace, maintained by the establishment of a proconsul in Syria, with a considerable body of troops, lasted for about twenty-five years. At the end of that time a new insurrection took place in Caesarea. The Jews and Samaritans rose, attacked the Christians, demolished the churches, surprised and massacred the Prefect Stephanus in his palace, and plundered the building. The wife of Stephanus fled to Constantinople. Adamantius was commissioned to inquire into the origin of the tumult, and to proceed against the guilty with the utmost rigour. Of the real cause we know nothing. Adamantius condemned the insurgents, executed many, confiscated the property of the most wealthy, probably for the restoration of the churches, and reduced the whole province to peace.

As the Samaritans will appear no more in this History, I pursue, to its termination, the account of this people.

(p. 70) CLOSE OF SAMARITAN HISTORY

The Samaritans found means to elude these laws, by submitting to baptism, resuming their property, and then quietly falling back to their ancient faith. A law of Justin, the son of Justinian, denounces this practice, and re-enacts almost the whole iniquitous statute of his father.<sup>7</sup> How far these measures tended to the comparative extinction of the Samaritan race, we cannot ascertain; but, at this time, they had so almost entirely in their hands the trade of money-changing, that a money-changer and a Samaritan, as, afterwards, a Jew and an usurer, were equivalent terms. Yet, after this period, few and faint traces of their existence, as a separate people, appear in history. In the seventeenth century, it was discovered that a small community still dwelt in the neighbourhood of their holy mountain, and had survived all the vicissitudes of ages, in a country remarkable for its

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<sup>7</sup> This singular law exempted the Samaritan peasants and husbandmen from its harsh provisions. Their cultivation of the soil did not concern themselves alone, but the welfare of the state, and especially the power of paying taxes to the state. Besides, the labouring on the soil presupposes a want of higher knowledge, which may naturally keep husbandmen from discovering the superiority of the Christian religion. Keeping the Sabbath, or performing any act which might throw suspicion on the sincerity of his conversion, subjected the Samaritan to exile or other punishment. No one was to be baptized until properly instructed. No Samaritan might have a Christian slave; a Samaritan captive, on turning Christian, acquired his freedom.

perpetual revolutions; that they still possessed the copy of the Law in the old Samaritan character;<sup>8</sup> and even to this day their descendants, a

(p. 71) SUPERSTITION OF THE AGE

feeble remnant of this once numerous people, are visited with interest by the traveller to the Holy Land.<sup>9</sup>

The zeal of the Emperor, while it burned more fiercely against the turbulent and disaffected Samaritans, in whose insurrections the Jews of Palestine seemed to have shared both the guilt and the calamities, did not neglect any opportunity of attempting either by force, or, we can scarcely hesitate to add, fraud, the proselytism of the Jews dispersed throughout the Eastern empire. The two great means of conversion were penal laws and miracles—sometimes compulsion. Among the boasted triumphs of the reconquest of Africa from the Vandals, was the reduction to the true faith of Borium, a town on the borders of Mauritania, where the Jews are said to have had a splendid temple, no doubt a synagogue more costly than usual.<sup>10</sup> The miracles indeed of this age are almost too puerile to relate; we give one specimen as characteristic of the times. It was the custom of the Church to distribute the crumbs of the consecrated Host which might remain, to children, summoned for that purpose from their schools. While Menas was Bishop of Constantinople, the child of a Jewish glass-blower went to the church with the rest, and partook of the sacred elements. The father, inquiring the cause of his delay, discovered what he had done. In his fury he seized the child, and shut him up in the blazing furnace. The mother went wandering about the city, wailing and seeking her lost offspring.

(p. 79) AC 531-579. CHOSROES- THE “EVERLASTING PEACE.”

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Chosroes the Just, or Nushirvan, who ascended the throne of Persia in the fifth year of Justinian, 531 A.c, was not more favourable to the Jews of Babylonia. Their schools were closed by authority. But so great was the impatience of the Palestinian Israelites under the oppressive laws of Justinian, that they looked with anxious hope to, and are reported by Christian writers to have urged, by an offer of 50,000 men, and by the splendid prospect of the plunder of Christian Jerusalem, the hostile advance of the Persian monarch. These hopes were frustrated by the conclusion of an " everlasting peace" between Justinian and

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<sup>8</sup> I do not remember that they attracted much notice among the earlier pilgrims or crusaders. The Samaritans were found by the traveller Pietro della Valle, in Cairo, Jerusalem, Gaza, Damascus, and Aleppo. Benjamin of Tudela speaks of one hundred Samaritan families in Sichem. After the Reformation the learned world were interested with a correspondence entered into with them by the famous Joseph Scaliger. R. Huntingdon, chaplain to the British Factory of Aleppo, sent to Europe more copious information. Their copy of the Old Testament was brought to Europe, and assumed great importance in Biblical criticism.

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritans have in modern times been visited over and over again by curious travellers. Their numbers seem at last to be dwindling away, so as to threaten their total extinction. See the latest, a very interesting account, by Mr. Grove, in a recent volume of Vacation Travels.

<sup>10</sup> Procop. de aedif. vi. 2. The temple was said to be of the age of Solomon.

Nushirvan, in which the pride of Rome was obliged to stoop to the payment of a great sum of money. The " everlasting peace " endured barely seven years, and the hopes of the Jews were again excited; but their day of vengeance was not yet come. After extending his conquests to Antioch, Nushirvan was constrained by the ability of Belisarius to retreat. Peace was again con

(p. 80) INVASION OF CHOSROES

cluded, Jerusalem remained unplundered, and the Jews and Samaritans were abandoned to the vindictive justice of their former masters.

**Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com**

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