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THE ZADOKITES

ABOUT a score of years ago the University of Cambridge was presented with the contents of a huge waste-paper basket, imported from Egypt, where such stores abound. The material contained in these repositories is almost always valueless, like the gods of the Gentiles unable to do good or harm, and so neither worth preserving nor worth destroying; and the first great product of the *Genizah* corresponded with this description. Of the "Original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus" the *International Journal of the Apocrypha* now writes¹: "Unfortunately, in defiance of every rule of philology and of every principle of historical development of the Hebrew language, these fragments have been accepted by a large number of scholars as being the very original of the hitherto lost book of Sirach." A bad mediæval retranslation made from texts already in our possession was neither worth preserving nor worth destroying; it was therefore thrown into the waste-paper basket, where it had best have been left.

In 1910 Dr. Schechter produced another of these treasures—"Fragments of a Zadokite Work," being some twenty pages of Hebrew text. The title "Zadokite" is rightly given by the editor, since we are told on p. 4 that the sons of Zadok are "the chosen of Israel who are to arise in the latter days." The matter is partly homiletic and partly legislative.

Who are the Zadokites? The editor in his Introduction cites for an account of them the "Book of Lights and High Beacons" by Kirkisani, "written about 637." Doubtless this is a misprint for 937; but it is an unfortunate misprint, since many a reader may be unaware

¹ January, 1913. Dr. Gaster's review of Oesterley's *Ecclesiasticus*.

of Kirkisani's date. This personage, who wrote in the tenth century in Arabic, belongs to the renaissance of Jewish literature, caused by the Islamic conquest of the East. Between the Fall of Jerusalem and the Foundation of Baghdad, i.e. from about 100 A.D. to about 750 A.D., the Jews had no written literature (other than letters and deeds) except the Old Testament ; this was supplemented by Oral Tradition, which when it was codified was found to be as vague and inconsistent as is regularly the case with matter so preserved. It is, however, from the Oral Tradition that Kirkisani gets his information about the Zadokites for the most part ; and with him Zadok is a disciple of Antigonus of Socho—clearly identical with the Sadducus whom Josephus places about the commencement of the Christian era. But the Zadok of Dr. Schechter's document is a very different personage—the priest who was contemporary with David !

Now though Dr. Schechter would have it that the Book of Zadok which Kirkisani quotes is identical with the text of these fragments or nearly so, the identification rests on no strong basis. According to Kirkisani the only matter whereon Zadok argued was the prohibition of marriage with a niece ; but the fragments also argue against polygamy, and the analogy whereby the former was proved unlawful is, as Dr. Schechter admits, a Karaite commonplace. We have to thank him further for a reference showing that polygamy was also disapproved by the Karaites. Now the Karaites and Rabbanites were the two divisions of Judaism which split after the Moslem conquest ; and though their official names with the Moslems were Ananites and Samatites (Traditionalists),¹ they called each other Pharisees² and Zadokites (Sadducees),³ thus reviving the

¹ Tabari in *Yakut's Dictionary of Learned Men*, vi. 454 (in the Press).

² Yepheth, *Comm. on Daniel*, ii. 15. ³ Ibn Ezra on *Daniel* xi. 30.

old names. Maimonides in the twelfth century naïvely says that the Sadducees of his time were called Karaites. He should have said that the Karaites were called Sadducees.

The probability is, then, that Kirkisani has confused the Karaites with the Sadducees, but he is unlikely to have confused the two Zadoks. According to Grätz the Karaites split into numerous sects, and their interpretation of the Bible was very defective. Since, as we shall see, the ignorance of Hebrew and of the Bible which is displayed by these documents is intolerable, we should *a priori* suppose that we had before us the remains of a Karaite essay, not earlier than the eighth century, which might well have been allowed to remain in its obscurity.

Probably it might be no exaggeration to say that continuous and satisfactory sense can be got out of very few lines; and emendation, besides being of necessity unconvincing, is difficult. For a couple of pages there is an alternative text, varying very widely from the main document, and exhibiting erasures which seem the work of an author rather than of a scribe. If the document be an original draft, its date is fixed by the material and the nature of the script—apparently for the tenth century. Now where a text is unintelligible, the probability is that the author is composing in an unfamiliar language, or translating from one language into another, and doing so irresponsibly. Dr. Büchler has felicitously identified the original language as Arabic—the phrase for “others than they” to which he points leaves no doubt on this matter.¹ Although we cannot expect this key to open all the locks, we shall find that it opens many.

A passage which illustrates Dr. Büchler's theory exceedingly well occurs on p. 5, and is otherwise characteristic of

¹ וּלְתַם = *siwāthum*.

the work. The author's object is to show that in spite of David's example polygamy was not permissible. "David did not read in the sealed Book of the Law which was in the Ark, for it was not opened in Israel from the day of the death of Elazar and Jehoshua and Josha and the Elders who worshipped the Ashtaroth, and it stored revealed until Zadok arose. And there went up the deeds of David except the blood of Uriah, and God left them to him." Here it is noticeable that the Arabic form for Joshua is Josha Yūsha'), whom the author evidently supposes to be a different person from Jehoshua. A precisely parallel blunder is committed by the Moslem savant Abū Ḥayyān Tauḥīdī, who died about 1009 A.D., in his treatise on friendship ;¹ " 'Isā said to his disciple Yashū', 'Thou shouldst love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself' " ; 'Isa and Yashu' being both Arabic forms for the name Jesus. The Hebrew author is not much less at sea on the subject of the Elders ; they did not themselves worship the Ashtaroth, but their successors, as appears from Judges ii. 7 and 12. Moreover since these Elders "outlived Joshua," and indeed according to a more literal translation "lived long after" him,² it is exceedingly inaccurate to speak of them all dying on the same day. The expression "it stored revealed until Zadok arose"³ is clearly a mistranslation of something or other ; in Arabic the active and passive are not distinguished in ordinary writing, whence "it stored" is easily explicable as a mistranslation of "it was stored" ; "revealed" appears to stand for "secretly," but it would require some ingenuity to restore the original. Zadok appears to be a mistake for Hilkiah ; and it is a mild one compared with the duplication of Joshua. "And there went up" may be easily explained as a mis-

¹ Constantinople, 1301, p. 64.

² Joshua xxiv. 31.

³ ויטמון נגלה.

translation of the Arabic for "there were done,"¹ and the formula "the deeds were done" for "the crimes were committed" is familiar to the student of Arabic; in the Koran Pharaoh says to Moses, "Thou didst the deed which thou didst," meaning "thou didst murder the Egyptian,"² and later writers imitate the expression.³ "Left" for "forgave" is also an Arabism, based on Syriac usage.⁴

One other specimen of this author's acquaintance with the Old Testament deserves quotation. P. 7, 9: "And all the despisers when God visits the land to render the requital of the wicked upon them (when there comes the word which is written in the words of Isaiah son of Amoz the prophet, who said, 'There shall come upon thee and upon thy people and upon thy father's house days which came from the day of the departing of Ephraem from Judah,' when the two houses of Israel separated, the prince of Ephraem from Judah), and all those who turned back were delivered to the sword and those who held fast escaped to the land of the north." As he said, "And I will reveal [!] ⁵ the tabernacle of your king and the euphemisms of your images from the tents of Damascus."

The writer then explains that the Tabernacle means the Law, since the king stands for the congregation, and the "euphemisms of your images" means that for which "your images" are periphrases, i.e. the Books of the Prophets, who were *despised*.⁶

Now that the text of Isaiah vii. 17 and of Amos v. 26 is grossly misquoted in this passage is very clear; hence emendation is both useless and uncritical. What the author wishes to prove is that from "the north," i.e. from Damascus

¹ פִּעֵלִית.

² xxvi. 18.

³ Hariri, Makama 34.

⁴ עִזַּב = שָׁבַק = תָּרַךְ.

⁵ וְהִגַּלְתִּי. The interpretation which follows shows that this is the meaning assigned.

⁶ He connects צִלָּם with the Syriac צִלָּם.

or Syria—the Arabic *sha'm* expresses all three ideas—the true account of the Old Testament is to come ; and he adds that the “ star ” also mentioned in Amos is the interpreter of the Law who came to Damascus. At a time when the Israelites divided into two parties, one of them was delivered over to the sword, whereas the other fled to Damascus (or Syria or the north).

Now it is unfortunate that we possess no real history of the Jews under the Caliphate, but only occasional notices ; whence we learn of armed risings, which being speedily suppressed, fell into oblivion. The historian Dionysius of Tell Mahré gives us an account of such a rising in the year 734, when a pseudo-Messiah caused the destruction of a number of Israelites ; he was finally arrested, brought before the Umayyad Caliph Hisham, and crucified after being tortured.¹ According to the authorities cited by Grätz, the founder of the Jewish sect called by Moslems the 'Isawīs headed an armed rebellion, which was suppressed by the Caliph's forces ; and this event appears to have taken place under the second Abbasid, Mansur. Copious as is Tabari's chronicle of Mansur's reign, he appears to take no notice of such a rising. Yet we may be sure that to the people who actually took part therein it seemed an event of primary importance. It would seem clear that the Zadokite author is referring to an occasion of this kind, wherein there was a Jewish rising, followed or accompanied by a schism ; and the party favoured by the author escaped to Syria.

An allusion to the Moslem government of Syria is to be found in the provision “ and if they shall settle in armies ² after the fashion of the land.” Syria was divided by the Moslems into *armies* (*ajnād*, plural of *jund*), five in number ;

¹ Dionysius ed. Chabot, p. 27.

² מַחֲנֹת.

the word *jund*, "army," came in consequence to signify "provincial capital."

Doubtless all the Messiahs who arose aimed at recovering the Holy Land and especially Jerusalem for their people, and assumed that in the case of their succeeding the Temple with its sacrifices would be restored. The author of this document has besides some suggestions for the administration of the community, under a *M'bakker*, whose name has been correctly identified with the Christian *episcopus* or bishop. He is to be learned in the *hagu*, i.e. alphabetical, script,¹ which may mean the Hebrew script; for it is remarkable that the Karaites at certain times and for certain purposes preferred to transliterate their Hebrew in Arabic characters. When the present writer was preparing a Karaite commentary for the press many years ago from a number of MSS. in the Hebrew character, numerous puzzles explained themselves when he came across, in the British Museum, certain fragments of the commentary in the Arabic character; for, as Hirschfeld remarked, Hebrew written as Arabic is far stranger in appearance than Arabic written like Hebrew.

Some of the methods of the Karaites reveal themselves if this text is studied. They were given to mutilating the names of the persons and things which displeased them, saying, e.g., *Pāsūl* (unlawful) for *Rasūl*, "the Prophet Mohammed"; *ḵālon* (shame) for *Kurān*. Similarly this author, speaking of his Rabbanite opponents, says (p. 1, 18) "they studied *ḥālākoth*, smooth things," for *ḥālāchōth*, "halachas," and "they chose *mahāthallōth*, "deceits," for *Mishnahs*. The following phrase, "they looked out for opportunities," contains a pure Arabic word² in Hebrew dress. What follows, "and they chose goodness of the

¹ See Arabic dictionary under הגו.

² פרצות.

neck,"¹ offers a puzzle. Now the Arabic word for "neck" also means "expectation"²; whence "they chose the good of expectation" seems to mean much the same as the foregoing change, "they looked out for opportunities."

It would seem, then, that this document also might have slept in its obscurity without serious loss, except perhaps to specialists in the controversy between Rabbanites and Karaites. Translation from Arabic into Hebrew can scarcely have commenced before 750 A.D., and the discovery of a document which is later than that date does not affect the principle laid down above for the treatment of Jewish literature; a principle which should have condemned the paper document containing the Hebrew Sirach without the need for further investigation. The Biblical student is aware that the LXX is a Jewish document, and there is no reason for believing the Syriac Old Testament (at least in its original form) to be anything else; indeed it can be shown that the Syriac Old Testament lies in places behind the earliest form of our Gospels. How comes it, then, that these documents, like the Apocrypha and Josephus, are preserved by Christians, and only borrowed from the latter occasionally by the Jews? The answer is to be found in that rule which forbade the writing of any book that did not form part of the Old Testament, a rule faithfully observed until the Moslems had set the example of composing books other than their Koran. Hence any paper document containing non-Biblical Hebrew matter can contain nothing earlier than the use of paper—which even in the ninth century had acquired little popularity.

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¹ טוב הצואר.

² רִפְּהָה.