

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE SAMARITAN SECTS; Gnosticism.

§ I. THE SAMARITAN SECTS.<sup>1</sup>

Extensive testimony is given by the Samaritan Chronicles, especially by Abu'l Fath, to the existence of sects since an early period; to this information much can be added from Patristic and Muslim sources. It is the more unfortunate that the data concerning these sects are meagre and confused, because these phenomena exhibit the operation of external forces affecting Samaritanism.

The arch-heresy of the Samaritans according to all accounts is that of the Dositheans. But before taking up this sect, it is advisable first of all to look at the others which are grouped along with it by the Christian authorities. First, the Jewish-born Hegesippus, of the II<sup>d</sup> Century, in a passage quoted by Eusebius, enumerates the Dositheans, the Gorothenians and the Masbothæans, to each of which he assigns an eponymous founder.<sup>2</sup> The Syrian Epiphanius is the next Christian writer to list the Samaritan sects, which he makes four in number, namely the Essenes, the Sebuæans, the Gorothenians, and the Dosi-

<sup>1</sup> For the literature, see *inter al.*, Juynboll, *Lib. Jos.* 110; Nutt, *Samaritan Targum*, 46; Appel, *De rebus Samaritanorum*, 90 (a brief essay: *De Dositheo et Dositheanis*). For the Rabbinic references, see S. Krauss, *Dosithée et les Dosithéens*, *REJ* xlii, 1901, p. 27; A. Büchler, *Les Dosithéens dans le Midrasch*, *REJ* xlii, 220; xliii, 50, who considerably criticizes Krauss's credence to the historic reliability of the Rabbinic material.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiæ*, iv, 22. "Gorothenians" is variously vocalized, though the tradition of the consonants is fairly certain. Nicetas has Sorothenians, *Thes. orthod. fidei*, i, 35; see Heinichen, *Eusebius, ad loc.*

theans.<sup>3</sup> It would be natural then to identify the Masbothæans with the Sebuæans.<sup>4</sup> Of the Sebuæans Epiphanius reports that out of hostility to the Jews and to avoid friction with them this sect observed the Passover in the month Tishri, so that their feast of Tabernacles fell about the Jewish Passover. The name has been variously explained, but the best interpretation is that of Juynboll, who deduces it from the Hebrew שבוע, "hebdomad," and makes it refer to the Passover celebration in the seventh month.<sup>5</sup> There is a single reference to this sect in *Abu'l Fath*, 131, where the Subuāi appear as opposed to Baba Rabba and as having their own ecclesiastical organization. Of the Gorothenians nothing further is known than Epiphanius's information that they agreed with the Dositheans in observing the orthodox calendar as against the Sebuæans.<sup>6</sup> As for the same authority's mention of the Essenes, all he tells us is that they were orthodox Samaritans, and in the disputes of the sects sided with the party who happened to be in the neighborhood of their respective communities. Some evidence will appear below of Essene influences in Samaria.

Of the Dositheans we possess much more extensive information, but all of a confused and contradictory character, and coming from every source, Samaritan, Jewish, Patristic, and Arabic. It is a question whether there is

<sup>3</sup> *Hæres*, i, 10; cf. his *Respons. ad epistol. Acacii et Pauli*. Epiphanius is followed by Theodoret, *Hæres*, i, 1; John of Damascus, in Cotelerius, *Eccles. Græc. monum.* i, 282; Nicetas, *l. c.*

<sup>4</sup> If the former is an independent sect, we have only the definition offered by Isidor Hispalensis, *Etymologia*, viii, 4, according to whom they held that Christ ordered them to sabbatize in all things—the sect thus appearing as a Christian body. Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 1868, vii, 135, identifies them with the Basmothæans of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, vi, 1, 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Lib. Jos.* 112. This etymology is supported by the Arabic form given in the next sentence of the text. For other explanations, see Nutt, *op. cit.* 47.

<sup>6</sup> Heidenheim would find a geographical origin for the name, *BS* ii, p. xxxviii.

not more than one sectary of the name Dositheus, while the age of the origin of the respective sects is uncertain. The following variant traditions have to be examined.

(1) There appear a Dostai and a Sabbai as the priests sent by the Assyrian king to Samaria.<sup>7</sup> (2) Sabbæus and Theodosius appear in the legend reported by Josephus, *AJ* xiii, 3, 4, concerning a dispute carried on before Ptolemy Philometor between the Jews and the Samaritans, the advocates of the latter being those two men.<sup>8</sup> (3) According to Abu'l Fath,<sup>9</sup> there arose in the time of Alexander a sect called Dustan, for which name an obscure etymology is offered.<sup>10</sup> These people held for impure a fountain into which dead vermin had fallen; altered the time for reckoning the purification of women; forbade the eating of eggs except those which were found inside a properly slaughtered fowl; considered dead snakes as unclean, as also cemeteries, and held anyone whose shadow fell upon a grave as impure for seven days. They rejected the formula, "Blessed be our God forever," and substituted "Elohim" for "YHWH;" they held that God was to be worshipped in the land Zuwaila (?), until he is worshipped (again) on Gerizim; they altered the calendar by giving thirty days to each month, and rejected the seasons of fast and mortification. Like the Jews, they counted Pentecost from the day after the Passover. A priest might enter an infected house as long as he did not speak; if there was a question whether the impurity of a house extended to the adjoining tenement, the case was decided by watching whether a clean or an unclean bird first lighted upon the latter. On the Sabbath they ate and drank only

<sup>7</sup> *Tanchuma*, sect. *Wayyesheb*, § 2; *Yalkut*, ii, 234; *Pirke Eliezer*, c. 38, *sub fin.* A variant for Sabbai is Zecharia.

<sup>8</sup> See above, p. 76. Theodosius and Dositheus are interchangeable forms; cf. the Biblical Jehoiachin and Conia.

<sup>9</sup> P. 82; cf. *Chron. Adler*, 37.

<sup>10</sup> The word is identical with "Dositheans"; for an attempt to explain the Arabic etymology, see de Sacy, *Chrestomathie arabe*, i, 335.

from earthen vessels, not from those of metal — as they might be tempted to purify the latter on the Sabbath, whereas clay vessels cannot be purified; food and water were provided for cattle on the day before the Sabbath so as to last over the latter day. They separated from the Samaritans and had their own synagogues. They had for highpriest a certain Zara, a man of profound learning and son of the Samaritan highpriest, who had been excommunicated for his conduct with a woman of bad character.

(4) Turning now to Patristic authorities, we learn of a Dositheus who was an early Samaritan heresiarch, and, with some authorities, the father of all heresy. Hippolytus, a scholar of Origen, began his *Book of Heresies* with the Dositheans; the same position is taken by the Pseudo-Tertullianic *Adversus omnes hæreses*, i, which work is probably based upon the lost book of Hippolytus, and which makes Dositheus the root of the Samaritan heresy, "the first to reject the prophets." Philaster also follows suit, saying that Dositheus was a Jew who denied the resurrection, being followed by Sadok, the founder of the Sadducees. The *Clementine Recognitions*, i, 54, gives like priority to Dositheus.<sup>11</sup>

(5) Another class of Patristic references places Dositheus in the Ist Century A. C., and generally in some sort of relation with Simon Magus. Hegesippus puts him immediately after Simon.<sup>12</sup> Origen makes several references to this heretic; he assigns him to the Ist Century, after the time of Christ, and alleges that he made himself out to be the Messiah promised by Moses, thus being in the same category with the pretenders Judas and Theudas. Of this sect Origen reports that only thirty remained in his day. They rejected the Jewish notion of sabbatic limits,

<sup>11</sup> For Hippolytus, see Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cxxi; Philaster, *De hæres*, 4; Jerome, *Adv. Lucifer*, 23, quotes Pseudo-Tertullian.

<sup>12</sup> See note 2.

and required that one should remain in the same condition throughout the Sabbath.<sup>13</sup> Jerome follows Hegesippus in placing Dositheus after Simon.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently this tradition is developed so as to make him the teacher of Simon, as in the Pseudo-Clementine literature, according to which the latter usurped his master's place.<sup>15</sup>

(6) Finally, according to a second report of Abu'l Fath, there is the sect founded by one Dusis in the age of Baba Rabba, the IVth Century, of which sect that chronicler gives a long description.<sup>16</sup> Dusis, son of Fufil (Philip ?), who seems to be assigned an Egyptian origin, came in danger of his life for adultery committed with a Jewess in a Jewish district. He obtained pardon however by undertaking to go to Samaria, there to found a new sect. He arrived at the town Askar, and associated himself with a sage named Yachdu, whom he led into some extreme literal interpretations of the Scriptures. But Dusis played his friend false by conniving at a charge of fornication against him, and so had to flee the land, settling at Shuwaika (the Biblical Soco, SW of Jerusalem). Here he composed many books, and upon leaving the place counselled his landlady that none should read them until he had first washed in the well which was close by. Then he departed, went to Anabata, where he entered a mountain cave; here he died of hunger, and his body was devoured by dogs. Meanwhile search for him was still prosecuted, and the highpriest's nephew Levi, a very pious young man, with a party of men, finally came upon his tracks at Shu-

<sup>13</sup> *Adv. Celsum*, i, 57; vi, 11; *In Matt. comm.* c. 33; *Hom.* 25 in *Luc.*; *In Joan* xii, 27; *De princ.* iv, 17; *Philokalia*, i, 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Adv. Lucifer.* 8. But for another report, see above, note 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Clem. Recog.* ii, 8; cf. *Hom.* ii, 24. Dositheus had a fixed college of thirty disciples.

<sup>16</sup> *Abu'l Fath*, 151; cf. *Chron. Neub.* 442, where he is called Dustis, son of Falfuli; also *Chron. Adler*, 64. Abu'l Fath's narrative follows immediately upon that concerning Simon Magus, a connection reminding us of some Patristic arrangements.

waika. The woman told them of Dusis' writings and his injunctions concerning them. Evidently out of fear, the party resolved to descend into the well, with the pretext that it could do no harm. But when the first who bathed emerged from the pool, he cried: "My faith is in thee and in Dusis thy servant!" Each of the men had the like experience, until at last Levi, angered at this manifestation, also dared to make the descent; but on emerging he too uttered the like confession: "My faith is in thee, УНУН, and in Dusis thy prophet!" Then they read the books of Dusis and found he had changed the greater part of the Law. At the following Passover Levi, who was called upon to read, made use of one of Dusis' readings, and upon being rebuked defied the Samaritans for their unbelief, whereupon he met a martyr's death. His followers removed to a city near Jerusalem, where they founded a sect, having as chief objects of its cult the writings of Dusis and palm-leaves stained with Levi's blood, which might be seen only by those who had first fasted seven days and nights. As for their customs, they cut off their hair, and made all their prayers in water, hiding their bodies in the bath by plashing the water over them. They greatly honored the Sabbath, observing feasts on that day only, and if they travelled at all on the Sabbath, they did not take their hands out of their garments. They believed the dead would rise again soon, and when one of their number died, they girded him, and put a stick in his hand and shoes on his feet, for the reason that "when we rise, we shall rise in haste." They also believed that as the dead man rose from the tomb, so should he enter Paradise. From this party of Dusis went forth many sects — which will be noticed below.

With this history the account Epiphanius, *Hæres.* i, 13, gives of the Dositheans largely agrees. According to that authority, the Dositheans confess the resurrection, abstain

from animal food, practise either celibacy or else sexual abstinence after the death of the wife,<sup>17</sup> and in general are devoted to ascetic habits. They are also scrupulous in avoiding contact with other people. As for the founder Dositheus, he was a very learned Jew who, disappointed of his ambitions in his own church, went over to the Samaritans and founded his sect among them. Finally he retired to a cave, and there died of voluntary starvation, his body being afterwards eaten by worms and flies. Also the references to the Dositheans left by Origen, as noted under (5), evidently refer to this same sect; he remarks their strictness as to travelling on the Sabbath, *De princ.* iv, 17, their possession of some books of Dositheus, and the belief in certain fables about him, how that he had not tasted death but was still alive, *In Joan.* xiii, 27.

Of the Dosithean sect which denied the resurrection (No. 4) we have evidence late into the Arabic period. Photius has preserved an account of a dispute held by Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria, probably about 600 A.C.,<sup>18</sup> with two parties of Samaritans; one of these followed "a certain Dosthes or Dositheos," and claimed him as the prophet foretold by Moses; he denied the resurrection, held that the world is incorruptible, and had composed many writings. The other party believed in Joshua as the prophet, and, it may be inferred, accepted the resurrection.<sup>19</sup> The bishop delivered a lengthy written argument against the sects, epitomized by Photius, and a council summoned by him passed a decree, which doubtless contributed to the repression of the Samaritans in Egypt.

From the beginning of the Arabic period down to the

<sup>17</sup> Either thus, or "after procreating children," the text being uncertain; see Oehler, *Corpus Hæresiologicum*, ad. loc.

<sup>18</sup> Photius, *Bibliotheca*, no ccxxx, ed. Stephan, Geneva, 1611, col. 883. The text places the bishop in reign of emperor Marcian, but there is reason to correct this to the reign of Mauricius, 582-603; see Krauss, *op. cit.* 39.

<sup>19</sup> For this belief in Joshua, see Chap. XII, note 162.

middle of the IXth Century, we have the testimony of the supplements to Codex C of *Abu'l Fath*<sup>20</sup> to violent feuds between the Dositheans and the orthodox Samaritans. Later we possess the evidence of Arabic writers to the Dositheans. First, Masudi (d. 956) speaks of two sects among the Samaritans, the Kushan and the Dustan, "one of which teaches that the world is eternal."<sup>21</sup> The great writer on religions, Shahrastani (d. 1153) is our next informant: the two sects of the Samaritans are the Dustaniya and the Kushaniya, and their chief point of difference is that the former deny a future life, teaching that recompense comes in this world, while the latter believe in a world hereafter.<sup>22</sup> Abu'l Fida (d. 1331) repeats Shahrastani's notice,<sup>23</sup> while Makrizi quotes Masudi.<sup>24</sup> According to the Epistle of 1810 there were then no Dositheans in existence.<sup>25</sup>

The terms given for the two sects by the Arab writers require examination, namely Dustanians and Kushanians, as also the epithet applied to the former, who are called al-Alfaniya, by Shahrastani, or al-Faniya, by Abu'l Fida. The former authority explains Kushaniya as "the truthful ones," and Alfaniya as "the liars." Juynboll's suggestion that the former term is a corruption for "qushtaniya," from the Aramaic קשט, "truth," is a happy one, and better than de Sacy's theory that it stands for "Kuthim," for the Samaritans never use that name of themselves. For the other word with its doubtful reading, various etymologies have been offered. Juynboll takes it from the root, *lfy*,

<sup>20</sup> Epitomized by Vilmar, *Abu'l Fath*; see pp. lxxx, lxxxii, lxxxiii.

<sup>21</sup> De Sacy, *Chrestomathie arabe*, i, 342. The dogma specified is that noticed by Eulogius.

<sup>22</sup> Ed. Cureton, i, 170; Haarbrücker's translation, i, 258; see de Sacy, *op. cit.* i, 363.

<sup>23</sup> Fleischer, *Abu'l-fedæ historia ante-Islamitica*, 160; see de Sacy, *op. cit.* i, 344.

<sup>24</sup> De Sacy, *op. cit.* i, 113, 305.

<sup>25</sup> *N. et E.* 127.



"injure one's rights"; Vilmar, accepting *alfaniya*, understands it as "millenarian." As the name is probably an opprobrious epithet given by the stronger party, Juynboll's etymology is preferable, unless, as I would suggest, *faniya* is to be connected with *panuta*, i.e. the Dositheans are the sect of the Aversion.<sup>26</sup>

As to the origin of the Dosithean sect Shahrastani gives the following information: "There arose among the Samaritans a man called al-Ilfan, who claimed prophethood and believed that he was the one Moses had promised, the star of whom, it is written, should shine with the light of the moon. His appearance took place about 100 years before Christ." This description agrees very closely with that of the heresiarch with whose sect Eulogius contended, while the date corresponds to that given by some Patristic authorities concerning their Dositheus.

With traditions referring wildly to a space of time ranging from Alexander the Great to the IVth Century A.C., what definite results as to chronology and personality can we gain from these contradictory reports concerning a heresiarch Dositheus or Dusis, and a sect of Dositheans or Dustan? To begin with, we can at once reduce our six categories to a smaller number. As for (1) and (2), their traditions of a Sabbai and Dositheus, or Theodosius, are probably mere reminiscences of two early sects the Sebuæans and Dositheans. At the utmost there may be some truth in the tradition that Dositheus opposed the Jews in Egypt, as Josephus relates. As for Sabbæus, he may be nothing more than an eponymous invention for the origin of the Sebuæans.<sup>27</sup> At all events Josephus gives us a date, the first Christian Century, before which the rise of the Sebuæans and one Dosithean sect must have

<sup>26</sup> For these various theories, see de Sacy, *op. cit.* i, 341; Juynboll, *Lib. Jos.* 112; Vilmar, *op. cit.* p. lxxii; Nutt, *op. cit.* 49.

<sup>27</sup> See the beginning of the Chapter.

taken place. The two categories (1) and (2) may then be identified with (3), the first mention in Abu'l Fath of a Dosithean sect, the one which arose in the age of Alexander.

But Abu'l Fath records at great length another sect of practically the same name (6). The Patristic data in (4) and (5) have then to be aligned with one or the other of the two named by Abu'l Fath, if we would attempt to reduce the six categories to two. This simplifies the case better than the views of Nutt and Krauss, who find three heresiarchs named Dositheus.<sup>28</sup> Can we go further and reduce these two to one? Such is the natural aim of the critical scholar, and it is the argument of Appel.<sup>29</sup> This scholar's reasons would lie in the many general resemblances between the two sects recorded by Abu'l Fath. Similar aspersions are made against the life and character of the respective heresiarchs; both are rigoristic sects, and follow some Jewish usages. The rejection of the formula, "Blessed be God forever," by the first sect, is claimed by Appel to be their denial of the Samaritan-Sadducean formula, and he assumes their adoption of the Pharisaic form, "Blessed be God forever and ever," which would be a confession of the resurrection.<sup>30</sup> Both sects then would possess the same eschatological tenets.

But plausible as Appel's hypothesis is, I am not able to accept it in the place of the one that I had already reached before reading his essay — namely that there were two Dosithean sects. As we have seen, according to a series of Patristic references one sect of Dositheans denied the resurrection, and so are placed in connection with the Sadducees. The later evidence from Eulogius down to the Islamic authorities knows only of one sect, namely the one

<sup>28</sup> Nutt, *op. cit.* 48; Krauss, *op. cit.* 36.

<sup>29</sup> *L. c.*

<sup>30</sup> Referring to *Berakot, Mishna*, c. 9, *sub fin.*, for the Sadduceans.