

Syrian Christian influence, Syr. ܚܝܬܐ being a *faction* as well as *group* (*agmen*, *πληθος*), *PSm*, 2576.

الصَّابِئُونَ (*Aṣ-Ṣābi'ūn*).

ii, 59 ; v, 73 ; xxii, 17.¹

The Ṣābians.

Like the اهل الكتاب and the Magians, they represent a group specially honoured in the Qur'ān as الذين آمنوا, but whom they represent, is still an unsolved puzzle.

The exegetes had no idea what people was meant by الصابئون, as is evident from the long list of conflicting opinions given by Ṭab. on ii, 59. They also differed as to its derivation, some taking it from صَبَا to *long for* (Shahrestānī, ed. Cureton, 203), and others from صَبَّأ, which they say means *to change one's religion* (Ṭab., loc. cit.).

Bell, *Origin*, 60, 148, is inclined to think that the word is just a play on the name of the Sabaeen Christians of S. Arabia. He himself notes the difficulties of this theory, and though it has in its favour the fact that an-Nasafī on xxii, 17, calls the Ṣābians نوع من النصارى, the fact that Muḥammad himself was called a Ṣābī by his contemporaries,² seems to show that the word was used technically in his milieu, and is not a mere confusion with Sabaeen. Grimme, *Mohammed*, 1904, p. 49, also looked to S. Arabia for the origin of the word, which he would relate to Eth. ጸብኤ, whose secondary meaning is *tributum pendere*, and which he would interpret as "Almosen spendend". This, however, is somewhat far-fetched.³

Wellhausen's theory *Reste*, 237, was that it was from Aram. ܨܒܐ = צבע, and given to the sect or sects because of their baptismal

¹ Sprenger, *Leben*, ii, 184, thinks we should read صابيا in xix, 13, referring to John the Baptist.

² Bukhārī (ed. Krehl), i, 96, 97 ; ii, 387, 388 ; Ibn Hishām, 229 ; and the verse of Sarāqa in *Aghānī*, xv, 138.

³ Vide Rudolph, *Abhängigkeit*, 74, n.