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## THE CARAITES.

At the present time, when the Jews are subjected to so much bitter persecution in various countries, it will be more than ordinarily interesting to read the following account of a remarkable sect of that once highly favoured but now despised people. They receive the name *Caraites* from the word *Caru*, which, in the Babylonish language, signifies Scripture. They declare openly for the written Word of God alone, rejecting all rabbinical interpretations, and traditions. They style themselves "Children of the Bible," and remain in a state of secession from the chief body of the Jewish nation, on the ground of their great attachment to the Scriptures. The following account of these Jewish seceders is derived from the *Glasgow Lectures on the Jews* :—

"The number of this sect over all the world is not believed to exceed that of the Rabbinical Jews in London alone. Their places of residence are the Crimea, Lithuania, and Persia ; Darauscus, Constantinople, and Cairo ; and, according to the missionary, Wolff, there exists a small establishment of them even in Jerusalem itself. To speak of the habitat of a Jew—to assign any portion of the earth as a locality to him, who, in virtue of the decree of heaven, ranks as a wanderer among the nations, is to use language not at once intelligible. Yet true it is, while all the rest of the Jews have been driven hither and thither, and have found rest only in the grave, the Caraites appear to have long enjoyed their humble settlements ; one party of them has reposed, some hundreds of years, on the margin of a beautiful lake in Lithuania ; for many centuries has another nestled, in felt security, on the mountain-rock of the Crimea ; while a third is said to have inhabited the desert of Hit, near the site of Babylon, from the time of Cyrus. The picturesque fortress of the Caraites in the Crimea, called the Jews' Castle, has been beautifully described by the celebrated traveller, Dr. Clarke, who tells us that, in a sepulchral grove on the mountain side, there stands a tomb-stone bearing a Hebrew inscription, the date of which reaches back more than six hundred years.

In the history of this people, there is evidently something peculiar, with reference to the judgments of God. Might not their circumstances, in some measure, be accounted for by the following fact ? During the reign of the empress Catharine, a communication was made to the Russian government, in which the Caraites declared that their ancestors had taken no part in the crucifixion of Christ ; and, according to the testimony of Dr. Clarke, they uniformly give out, that their forefathers stepped aside from the main body of the Jewish people, in the very earliest periods of their history. This is corroborated by Wolff. On his discovery of the original stock or Caraites, they told him that their ancestors had indeed shared in the Babylonish captivity, but that, alarmed