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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE
CHURCHMAN

MARCH, 1891.

ART. I.—THE MAXIMS OF THE JEWISH FATHERS.

THAT in the services at a Jewish synagogue two lessons are read from “the Law and the Prophets” now, as in the days of our Saviour, is a fact doubtless well known to most.

It will, however, not be so generally known that on certain sabbaths¹ in the year another book of a very different kind is steadily read through week by week. This is the so-called *Pirke Aboth*, or the maxims of the fathers—a book which may be viewed, in a sense, as the very kernel of the Talmud.

It may be well to make it clear in a very general way what is meant by this word Talmud; for it may be doubted whether many, even of those who have laughed at the mediæval monk’s notion of “Rabbinus Talmud,” of a gigantic work so called from its author, have themselves more than the vaguest idea on the subject.

The Jewish belief then was that, besides the written law of Moses, which we know as the Pentateuch, special revelations were made to him when he was admitted to behold the glory of God on the top of Mount Sinai. This oral law was handed down through a long course of generations, and not till about two hundred years after Christ was a definite attempt made to reduce it in some sort to writing. The chain of succession is thus given in the opening sentence of the *Pirke Aboth*: “Moses received the law from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua,

¹ It may be worth noting that in synagogues of the Sephardic Use (Jews of Spain, etc.) the Sabbaths are those between Passover and Pentecost; in those of the Ashkenazic Use (Jews of Germany, Poland, etc.) this reading is continued to New Year’s Day—that is, the Jewish New Year’s Day, the 1st of Tisri.

and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and they delivered it to the men of the Great Synagogue." The mass of decisions and opinions of the great doctors of the nation, based on this oral and on the written law, was at last embodied in writing and reduced to some kind of arrangement by Rabbi Judah, surnamed the Holy, the president of the great college at Tiberias. This is the work we know as the Mishnah, the Lesson *par excellence*. One is tempted to apply to it those words which Tennyson applies to English law :

That codeless myriad of precedent,
That wilderness of single instances.

Yet for many centuries the Jewish mind saw in it deeper truths than those of the Bible, as the Rabbi says in the miracle-play in Longfellow's "Golden Legend" :

For water is all Bible lore,
But Mishna is strong wine.

The Mishnah, on its publication, at once became a new basis for exposition, and two commentaries were gradually formed, one in the Babylonian and the other in the Palestinian schools; whence, from text and commentary combined, arose the two Talmuds of Babylon and (so-called) of Jerusalem.

We must now return to the *Pirke Aboth*. Here, broadly speaking, we have the sayings of a line of Rabbis, from "the men of the Great Synagogue"—the scholars traditionally associated with Ezra in his work of reformation—to Judah the Holy.

Of the more famous names in this list we may mention one or two. We meet with Antigonus of Socho, to whom some would refer indirectly the origin of the Sadducees. We have the great name of Hillel, the president of the Sanhedrin, who died at the age of a hundred a few years after our Saviour's birth, and whose son and successor, Simeon, some would identify with him who spoke the "Nunc Dimittis." Hillel's grandson was the yet more famous Gamaliel, the teacher of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. One other name may suffice, that of Akiba, the associate of Bar-Cochba, the false Messiah, who headed the last desperate rising of the Jews against the Romans in A.D. 135.

Still, a Christian student's interest in our document is not to be narrowed to the sayings of a few well-known names. One or two may actually have been of those Pharisees who heard our Lord's denunciations; but in any case it is to this party that all, or nearly all, belong. In other words, the portraiture of the Pharisees derived from the New Testament is here supplemented from the other side. Here we see the portraits painted by themselves.

The result in its broad features is strikingly like what we might have looked for. What could they do, these guides of a people, from whom, however keenly the pulse of national life beat, independence was gone for ever? In the unrelaxing grip of Rome, what freedom remained for them? Nay, more: Greek philosophy and culture threatened to sap the soundness of their belief. One thing alone remained—their religion and law. To this with desperate tenacity they clung; round this everything circled. Accordingly, the teaching of Rabbi after Rabbi dwells on the thought of guarding the law, on the all-importance of the study of it, on the dangers of neglect or unworthy use of it.

It will be well to exemplify our meaning by some definite instances. The men of the Great Synagogue, already referred to, enjoined, "Be cautious in judgment, and raise up many disciples, and make a hedge for the law." Everything is subordinated to the one end. The law must be jealously guarded, and scholars must be trained who can guard it aright. A "hedge" must be made for the law; fresh restrictions must be devised, by which the chance of transgression is lessened. A familiar instance of this may be found in the treatment by the Jews of our Lord's time of the injunction (Deut. xxv. 3) that a judge may not impose more than "forty stripes" on an offender. Consequently, to be on the safe side, as it were, the later Jews inflicted only thirty-nine (2 Cor. xi. 24).

The last survivor of "the men of the Great Synagogue" was Simeon the Righteous. Though it is not well to be too certain, we can hardly doubt that we may identify him with "Simon the high-priest, the son of Onias" (Ecclus. i. 1), the last of the worthies of Israel whom the son of Sirach commemorates. His habitual saying was, "On three things the world stands—on the law, and on Divine service, and on the showing of kind actions."

Under conditions of life such as we have been considering, it is clear that the position of the Rabbi would become increasingly one of importance. They were, *par excellence*, the leaders of the people. Nor were the Rabbis themselves slow to insist upon this. For example, we find Jose ben Joezer in the habit of saying, "Let thy house be a house of assembly for wise men, and cover thyself with the dust of their feet, and thirstily drink in their words." The same injunction is echoed by one who bears a much more widely known name, the great teacher of Saul of Tarsus. Rabban¹ Gamaliel used to say,

¹ This title Rabban is higher than that of Rabbi. Its use is restricted to seven men; all, with one exception, descendants of the great Hillel. The one exception is Rabban Jochanan ben Zaccai, who was the president

"Get thyself a Rabbi, and keep thyself far from doubt, and do not get into the habit of paying tithes by guesswork;" in other words, Aided by the guidance of a master, aim at making belief and duty alike definite, and so avoid the temptation of drifting away into "philosophy and vain deceit" on the one hand, or of being swayed by self-interest into robbing God on the other. The lines of "In Memoriam"—

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds—

Gamaliel would have repudiated with horror.

With such views of the study of the law, it is clear that everything, however innocent in itself, which tempts men away from that study is highly dangerous. Thus we find R. Dosa saying, "Sleep in the morning and wine at mid-day, and gossip of young people, and sitting in houses where common people¹ meet, take men out of this world." It will thus be seen that this feeling, while having an undoubtedly noble side, is capable of degenerating into narrowness, and even bitterness: the last-quoted saying, spite of a certain amount of truth, would be a dangerous weapon in the hands of a fanatic.

Female society might prove a dangerous rival to the study of the law. Hence Jose ben Jochanan, after laying down the noble precept, "Let the destitute be the children of thy house," goes on to say, "Do not talk much with women: it was of a man's own wife that [the wise men] said it, much more of the wife of one's neighbour. Hence the wise men have said, Everyone who talks much with women brings about evil to himself, and ceases from the words of the law, and his end inherits Gehenna."

Again, a later Gamaliel, son of Judah the Holy, after bidding, "Make [God's] pleasure to be even thy own pleasure, that He may make His pleasure to be as thy pleasure," adds the less satisfactory sentiment, "Make thy pleasure to cease before His pleasure, in order that He may make the pleasure of others to cease before thy pleasure."

From a certain R. Jacob we get the statement that the study of the law can brook no possible rival, not even admiration of God's fair earth. He says, "He who walks

of the Sanhedrin for a time after the destruction of Jerusalem. The title, with a pronominal affix, is twice applied to our Lord in the Gospels: Mark x. 51, John xx. 16.

¹ Lit. "people of the land," the vulgar herd. We find an exact parallel to this sentiment in the remark of the Pharisees (John vii. 49). "This people (ὄχλος, not λαός), who knoweth not the law, are cursed." We find even the liberal-minded Hillel saying, "No vulgar person can be pious."

along a road studying, and, breaking off from his study, says, 'How beautiful is that tree! How beautiful is that field!'—the Scripture imputes it to him, as though he had incurred the guilt of death;" and R. Judah says, "Be careful in study, for a mistake in study amounts to wilful sin." That is to say, forgetfulness and inaccuracy amount to moral guilt, a sentiment more suggestive of a *plagosus Orbilius* than anyone else. One is irresistibly reminded of the Doctor's address to Arthur Pendennis, in chapter ii. of his veracious history: "A boy who construes *dè and*, instead of *dè but*, is guilty not merely of folly, ignorance and dulness inconceivable, but of crime, of deadly crime, of filial ingratitude which I tremble to contemplate."

Yet, on the other hand, we meet occasionally with sentiments of a distinctly noble order.

Antigonus of Socho used to say, "Be not like servants who serve the master in order to receive a reward, but be like servants who serve the master not in order to receive a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you." In other words, we should aim at serving God disinterestedly, and not simply from the hope of recompense in the world to come. A current Jewish tradition, which, however, must be viewed as very doubtful, would derive the sect of the Sadducees from a perversion of this teaching: "We are bidden not to work for reward; perhaps, indeed, there is no reward or world to come."

A remark of Hillel, though cast in rather enigmatic form, is full of suggestiveness: "If I am not for myself, who is there for me? and when I am for myself, what am I? and if I am not so now, when shall I be?" Man must "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling." No other man can do this for him—"no man may deliver his brother;" yet how entirely vain his unassisted efforts would be!

Hillel's great-grandson, Simeon, the son of Gamaliel I., used to say, "All my life I have grown up among wise men, but I never found anything good for one (*lit.*, for the body) but silence;¹ and it is not learning that is the main thing, but work, and everyone who multiplies words brings on sin."

In a later chapter Hillel appears again. There is wisdom in his counsel, "Do not judge thy neighbour till thou comest to his place," and "Do not say, 'When I have leisure I will study,' lest thou never have leisure." There is wisdom and true nobleness in the injunction, "In the place where there are no men, endeavour to show thyself a man."

One more example of this type may suffice. A certain

¹ Carlyle would have liked this, with his "Speech is silvern, but silence is golden."

Rabbi Tarphon, whom some, with apparently very little reason, would identify with the Trypho with whom Justin Martyr's famous dialogue is held, expresses the truth of man's relation to God, and the relation of this world to the next in a very striking way: "The day is short and the work is heavy, and the labourers are slothful and the reward is great, and the Master of the house is urgent. He used to say, 'The work is not given thee *to finish*, but thou art not a free man to cease from it.'"

Reference has already been made to Rabbi Akiba, as one of the leaders in Bar-Cochba's revolt. The Talmud tells concerning him, that he was put to death by the Romans, by having his flesh torn from his bones by iron combs; yet amid the torture he was able to recite the confession of faith known to the Jews as the *Shma*. This formulary is so called from its first word, meaning "Hear thou" (Deut. vi. 4). "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is One." As he pronounced the word "One," so runs the story, he died, and a voice came from heaven, "Blessed art thou, O Akiba, that thy soul hath departed with 'One'"—with the proclamation of monotheism with his last breath.

A striking saying of Akiba is preserved in the *Pirke Aboth* :

Everything is given on pledge,¹ and the net is spread over all living things: the shop is open and the shopman gives credit, and the hand is writing, and anyone who wishes to borrow can come and borrow, and the collectors are going round continually every day and exacting from the man, whether he knows it or knows it not, and they have whereon they can lean, and the judgment is a judgment of truth, and all is prepared for the banquet.

A thought which has often been echoed is that embodied in the saying of Elisha ben Abuyah. This Rabbi indulged in various subtle speculations, the outcome of which was that he drifted away from the faith. The Talmud tells a curious story, that after his fall he asked children from thirteen synagogues to tell him the verse of Scripture they had learnt: in every case the verse seemed to pronounce his condemnation. A curious modern application of the name has been in a Hebrew translation of Goethe's "Faust" by the late Max Letteris. Here Faust is represented by Elisha ben Abuyah, "who entered upon things too wonderful for him in the meditations of his heart." The saying, however, attributed to this Rabbi, is a very simple truth: "He who learns as a child, to what is

¹ The Hebrew word here is that which meets us in the New Testament as ἀρραβών (2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5, Eph. i. 14), "the earnest." In these passages, it will be noticed, there is rather the notion of a partial bestowal of a gift, as an earnest of a fuller gift hereafter; whereas the Old Testament use of the word is simply that of a *token* or *warrant* of future payment.

he like? To ink written on new paper. And he who learns as an old man, to what is he like? To ink written on blotted paper?"

Sometimes a very decidedly quaint element is present in these sayings. The following pair furnishes an amusing illustration of jealousy as between older and younger teachers. R. Jose ben Jehudah says, "He who learns from young men, to what is he like? To one who eats sour grapes and drinks wine from his vat. But he who learns from old men, to what is he like? To one who eats ripe grapes and drinks old wine." R. Jose is evidently by no means a young man himself, and receives a sharp retort from R. Meir, who evidently is, "Look not at the pitcher, but at what there is in it: you may have a new pitcher full of old wine, and an old one in which is not even new wine."

The fifth chapter of the *Pirke Aboth* consists largely of sets of ten and seven and four things, associated or contrasted. The first of these, which we shall cite, contains matters of a more speculative and less practical character than those which we have already cited:

Ten things were created in the evening of the Sabbath, between the lights (that is, in the moment of transition between the sixth day and the seventh, which could not strictly be spoken of as belonging to either day), and they are these: The mouth of the earth,¹ the mouth of the well,² the mouth of the ass,³ and the rainbow, and the manna, and the rod [of Moses], and the shamir, and the alphabet,⁴ and the writing, and the tables (i.e., the two tables of stone), and some say also the tomb of Moses our Rabbi, and the ram of Abraham our father, and some say also the demons, and also a pair of tongs, which must have been made with another pair of tongs.

The thought which underlies this idea is clearly this: All these things existed in their proper season, yet no mention is made in Scripture as to the time of their creation. They were not, then, created in the six days of creation, and they cannot have been created on the seventh, for then God rested from His works; therefore they must be referred to a sort of "debatable ground" between the sixth and seventh day.

Most of the items tell their own story. The *shamir* bears a less familiar name, though a favourite topic in Rabbinic legend. The *shamir* was a sort of worm, which had the power of cutting through the hardest stones if placed upon them. For example, we are told (1 Kings vi. 7) "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building." The Rabbinic fancy is to explain this

¹ Numb. xvi. 32.

² *Ibid.*, xxi. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, xxii. 28.

⁴ This and the following are probably to be explained of writing in the abstract and concrete respectively.

as brought about by the *shamir*, a saving consequently both of noise, labour, and material.

Why a pair of tongs should be specially singled out for creation at this exceptional time may seem rather extraordinary. The reason is simply this: Every pair of tongs that is made implies an earlier pair of tongs with which to handle the red-hot iron while fashioned into tongs. Thus we get an endless chain of causation, until at last we come to the archetypal pair, made without hands, and created immediately by God.

We shall conclude our quotations by three instances of curious contrasts:

There are seven things in a "clod," and seven in a wise man. A wise man does not speak before one who is greater than himself in wisdom or in rank; he does not break into the midst of the speech of his companion; he is not in a hurry to answer; he asks questions with reference to the subject-matter, and answers according to the orthodox view; he speaks with reference to the first thing first and the last thing last; and with reference to a matter which he has not heard, he says, I have not heard, and he confesses the truth; and the opposites of these things are in a "clod."

There are four sorts of dispositions: One easily provoked and easily appeased—his gain is cancelled by his loss. One hard to provoke and hard to appease—his loss is cancelled by his gain. One hard to provoke and easy to appease—he is a godly man. One easy to provoke and hard to appease—he is a wicked man.

There are four sorts of those who sit before wise men: a sponge and a funnel, and a strainer and a sieve. The sponge is he who spongeth up everything; and the funnel is he who letteth in at this ear and letteth out at that. The strainer is that which letteth out the wine and retaineth the dregs; and the sieve is that which letteth out the bran and retaineth the fine flour.

It has sometimes been said that had not God in His providence for His Church raised up the great Apostle of the Gentiles to proclaim His truth, then, humanly speaking, Christianity would have taken a totally different form. The further thought might be added that had not Saul of Tarsus been converted to the faith of Jesus, then of a surety there would have been no Rabbi in the schools of Jerusalem more keen and resolute than he, no fiercer champion for the cause of the law, no more unwavering combatant for the traditions of the fathers. Probably we should have found shrewd and pointed sayings of his in the *Pirke Aboth*.

It would be an interesting study in the realm of "things that might have been" to ponder upon the possible course of Saul of Tarsus as one of the foremost of the Rabbis. More profitable is it to dwell on him as one who summed up all wisdom in "Christ crucified," as Paul "the ambassador" of Christ, as the old man who, alone in his Roman prison save

for the faithful Luke, can declare that wisdom unto salvation can be got from the ancient writings of his nation, simply "by faith, which is in Christ Jesus."

ROBERT SINKER.

ART. II.—DR. DÖLLINGER ON THE INFALLIBILITY
OF THE POPE.

THE indefatigable Professor Reusch has given to the world another instalment of Dr. Döllinger's writings: *Kleinere Schriften gedruckte und ungedruckte von Joh. Jos. Ign. v. Döllinger*. Stuttgart, 1890. Some of these have been published before, and at least one of them, that on mediæval prophecies, has been translated into English (Rivingtons, 1873). But many even of those speeches and articles which have been previously published in pamphlets and periodicals will be quite new to English readers. Of the pieces which have never been printed before the most important are an "Historical Sketch of the Council of Trent," and a portion of a biography of Pius IX. The latter is a beautiful piece of work, but it carries us no further than 1855. The following translation of an article on the Vatican Decrees was made soon after the original appeared in the *Deutscher Merkur* in 1876, but it was not published because the original article was left unfinished. Dr. Reusch has rightly included this valuable fragment in his collection, and the translation of it may now see the light. The article was written by Dr. Döllinger on the appearance of a German translation of Mr. Gladstone's famous pamphlet on the Vatican Decrees. The English translation of it will be read with interest in connexion with the debate in the House of Commons on Wednesday, February 5th.

Gladstone's pamphlet shows in detail what to everyone acquainted with history and the internal circumstances of the Roman Catholic Church is an incontestable truth, that perfect loyalty of subjects to their Sovereign and to the law of the land is absolutely incompatible with a serious acceptance of the Vatican Decrees of 1870.

The decrees, as is well known, have made it an article of faith that the reigning Pope, and likewise all his 257 predecessors, have always been infallible in the whole sphere of faith and morals, and that all his successors likewise will always be so; and that therefore every Catholic—nay, every baptized Christian—is bound to accept and obey every Papal utterance or decision, if only it falls within the immeasurably wide province of morality, or in any way comes in contact with it, with the same unconditional obedience, the same absolute surrender of his own judgment, with which he would submit to a command directly revealed by God