

that wish, with the oneness with God which is the secret of our power; and that, in one word, the faith supposed by the objection is in reality unbelief, and, as such, does not come within the range of our Lord's promise. If it is true that by faith God's power becomes ours, it is equally true that our power then becomes God's; and in such an union it is as impossible for us to use God's power for ends foreign to his purposes as it is impossible for God to use man's power for ends contrary to man's good.

For my own part I am inclined to believe that the growth of individual believers into such power as Christ here promises depends on a collective growth of the Church; but that when the Church shall be as a whole full, through faith, of Divine life and power, then, if the furtherance of God's spiritual purposes demand it, elect souls will arise who shall be able to say to a mountain, whatever it may be, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; or to a tree, whatever it may be, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it shall obey them: nay, more, no miracle, however great, shall be impossible to them.

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SOME TRACES OF A HEBREW GOSPEL.

NOT long ago the pages of *THE EXPOSITOR*¹ contained a discussion of much interest concerning the language commonly used by our blessed Lord during his min-

¹ Vol. vi. pp. 81, 161, 285, 307; Vol. vii. pp. 81, 278, 368. The writers of the articles above alluded to did not notice that in the exclamation of our Lord on the cross (Psa. xxii. 1), the words of the Hebrew Psalm are not quoted, but that, instead of the Hebrew *azabthani*, we have the Aramaic *sabachthani*. These words,

istry. In the course of the discussion incidental allusions were made to the language in which some of the Gospels originally appeared. It may therefore be interesting to give some notice of what appears to be a trace of the existence of a Hebrew Gospel. The passage in which such a trace seems to be contained is one of the treatises of the Babylonish Talmud. It is not necessary to discuss the date of the Talmud in its present form. Unquestionably, it has undergone several modifications in its composition; but the way in which Jewish tradition was constantly handed on, with a religious care that the original authorities should be named, and sometimes also the channels through which the narrative had come, makes it almost a matter of certainty that, when a story in the Talmud is definitely connected, as is the one about to be quoted, with the names of individuals, its truthfulness is not open to much doubt.

Now there is found in such a narrative a sentence which, from its form, can hardly be anything short of one of the utterances of our Lord. But before giving the extract in which these words are found, it will be necessary to give some historical notice of the actors in the story, in order to render it intelligible, and to shew how closely the incident recorded in it goes back to the time of our Lord's life.

The Gamaliel who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles¹ had a son, Shimeon, whose son Gamaliel II.,

uttered in the midst of great agony, would most likely be given in the form in which they had been most familiar to Jesus, and in which He had used them in his home in Galilee. The mistake of the crowd, who supposed that Elias was being invoked, also points to a dialectic peculiarity in the pronunciation of the Aramaic; and that there was such a peculiarity in the accent of our Lord and his companions, is apparent from the remark made to St. Peter (Matt. xxvi. 73), "Surely thou art one of *them*, for thy *speech* bewrayeth thee."

¹ Acts vi. 34; xxii. 3.

and daughter Imma Shalom (the name which in the New Testament becomes *Salome*), are the persons of whom the story to be quoted is told. Imma Shalom was married to Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. Shimeon, the son of Gamaliel I., was in all probability older than St. Paul; and so his children may have been alive even in the life of our Saviour, and they certainly saw the Temple before its destruction by the Romans, A.D. 70. Rabbi Eliezer was one of the most learned men of his time, and to him is ascribed the book known as *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer*. It is said of him,¹ "If all the wise men of Israel were put in one scale of a balance, and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the other, he would outweigh them all." But in spite of all his fame among his own people, he fell under a suspicion of being favourable to the doctrines of Christianity: we are even told² that on one occasion he was brought before the Roman authorities on such a charge;³ and his language at that time is such as to shew that he had been much interested in the new teaching.

Now it is clear that the wife of such a man, if she were attached to her own religion, would do all in her power, and get all the help she could, to wean her husband from what she would naturally feel were dangerous tendencies. It seems probable that the action described in the following extract⁴ from the Talmud was due to some such desire.

"Imma Shalom was the wife of Rabbi Eliezer, and the sister of Rabban Gamaliel (the second). Now there

¹ *Pirke Aboth*, ii. 11.

² *Midrash Rabbah* on Eccles. i. 8.

³ This is worthy of being remembered by those who consider that much of the persecution which fell upon the early Christians was inflicted on them by people who made no distinction between Jews and Christians.

⁴ *Talm. Babl. Shabbath*, 116 a, 116 b.

was a *Philosophus*¹ in their neighbourhood, who had got a name for not taking bribes, and they (Imma Shalom and Gamaliel) wished to turn him into ridicule. So she brought him a present of a golden lamp, and they came before him (as if to take his opinion). She said to him, I should like them to divide for me the property of our family. He said, Divide it. He (Gamaliel) said to him, It is written for us (*i. e.*, in the Old Testament Scriptures), Where there is a son, a daughter doth not inherit. He answered, From the day that ye were removed from your land, the law of Moses was taken away, and another law was given; and therein it is written, *The son and the daughter shall inherit alike*. Next day he (Rabban Gamaliel) brought him (the *Philosophus*) a Libyan ass (a valuable present in Eastern countries). Then he said to them, I have sunk myself down (*i. e.*, read further on) in the book, and it is there written, *I am not come to take away from the law of Moses, neither to add to the law of Moses am I come*. And it is written there (*i. e.*, in the Mosaic law), Where there is a son, a daughter doth not inherit. She said to him, Let thy light shine as the lamp (thus giving him a pointed reminder of yesterday's gift). But Rabban Gamaliel said, The ass has come and kicked down the lamp."

With the history of this family in our minds, we can readily understand the motive of this brother and sister in making a visit to a Christian, exactly after the fashion in which Jews went to their own Rabbi; only that their object was not to be guided by his advice, but, by finding out his weakness, to be able to hold him up to Rabbi Eliezer as a pretender to a virtue in one

¹ A various reading renders it probable that the word here was *Episcopus*. The man was clearly a person of distinction, and looked up to as an authority among the Christians.

respect (viz., his superiority to the temptation of a bribe) which he did not possess, and that therefore he was most likely an impostor in all.

We can see, also, in the conduct here narrated, an illustration of that tendency which St. Paul rebukes in the Christian congregations in Corinth: "Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers."¹ Here are two persons, who must have held a distinguished place in the Jewish society among which they lived, who go for an opinion to a teacher to whose religious lessons they are most strongly opposed. It does not matter that the visit before us was made only to turn the teacher into ridicule. The fact of the visit being made, as if in search of an opinion by which they might be guided, shews that such occurrences were probably not infrequent where Jews, Christians, and heathens were dwelling in one community.

It is interesting to notice that the Christian teacher was settled, and his views well known, among a Jewish population. It is most likely that the incident occurred at Jamnia, where, through the influence of Jochanan ben Zakkai (Zacchæus), the Jews, or the most distinguished part of them, were allowed by Vespasian to settle, and make, as it were, another Jerusalem. We can see from the phraseology—"From the day that ye were removed from your land"—that the story goes back to the times when the generation lived who had been in Jerusalem at the overthrow.

This Christian teacher, to whom their visit was made, is represented to us as speaking of another law which he places on a level with the law of Moses, and which he declares to have superseded that law since the

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 6.

overthrow of Jerusalem. This new law he possesses in a *book*, *i. e.*, in a roll, as a collected volume, exactly in the same way as he possesses the Pentateuch. We therefore cannot doubt that, whatever it was which he had, it was a complete work; for he says at the second visit, "I have read further on in the book." The words preserved to us as extracts from this book are not exactly a rendering of any Verses in our Gospels; but there are many reasons why this was likely to be the case. We can see that even Rabban Gamaliel, in quoting from the Old Testament, gives rather the spirit than the letter of the law. 'There is no such sentence to be found in Holy Writ as, "Where there is a son, a daughter does not inherit. The words of Scripture are, "If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter."'¹ From which sentence the rule was derived which Gamaliel propounds. We may in the same way suppose that the quotations made by the *Philosophus* are not to be taken as literal extracts from his book.

But we may, on the contrary, believe that they are the very words of some one of those many accounts of the Gospel history to which St. Luke alludes in the preface of his Gospel; and that in an Aramaic Version the words of Jesus had been given forth to some audience in the form which they have here retained, and had been so recorded in a Gospel long since lost.

The two passages quoted from his book by the *Philosophus* do not, however, stand on the same footing. For the first—"The son and the daughter shall inherit alike"—we have no parallel whatever in the Gospels. But when we turn to the lessons inculcated

¹ Num. xxvii. 8.

by the apostles, we find something which may have very well been the outcome of such teaching as is here described as contained in one part of the book. St. Paul's lesson to the Galatians breathes the same spirit. "In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female."¹ There may well have been an utterance of Christ on which these words of his great Apostle are grounded, and which—like "It is more blessed to give than to receive"²—have found no place in any Gospel, but are among those many things of which St. John hyperbolically says "the world could not contain the books," if they had been recorded every one.

But it is also rendered very probable that our Saviour did utter more than once some such lessons as that which spake of the equality of man and woman, if we consider who were those who so closely followed Him and ministered unto Him during his public life. It would be difficult to find any other great teacher of old times about whom it is so often mentioned that, in the throng about him, women were included. Yet this is a marked feature in the story of Christ's life on earth. Among the Jews, as we can see from this narrative, the position of women was an inferior one to that of men. And there are traces of the same inferiority in the Gospels, notably in that thought which is attributed to the disciples when they came back and found their Lord talking with the woman of Samaria: "And they wondered that he talked with *a woman*"³ (μετὰ γυναικός). There must have been a different feeling in Christ's mind from that current among his countrymen, and the feeling must have manifested itself by actions and words before He brought about Him the ministra-

¹ Gal. iii. 28.² Acts xx. 35.³ John iv. 27.

tions of so many women ; else it would not have been said of Him that " Jesus loved Mary and her sister Martha," and we should not have heard of the women at the cross, and the women bringing spices to the grave of their crucified Teacher. It is therefore in no wise impossible that, among the sayings of Jesus, may have been some not preserved in our Gospels, which spake in the tone of this text of the *Philosophus* in the Talmud, and said, " Son and daughter shall inherit alike."

But when we come to consider the second text, we seem to be on much firmer ground. We have a sentence couched exactly in the form in which Jesus is reported to have spoken in the discourse in which He sets forth more fully than elsewhere the spirit of the gospel, and the changes which He sought to work among his followers, and through them upon the world. No other teacher had spoken to the Jews as though he personally could contemplate the law of Moses as something that might be changed. But, " Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil,"¹ is in the very tone of the words of the text quoted by the *Philosophus*. The sentiment is the same, and the use of the first person, in a sentence quoted from what is called " another law," and placed on a level with that of Moses, stamps the quotation as one that can be referred to no other speaker than Jesus, on whose followers we see that the actors in this story had the strongest motive for casting ridicule. In these words we have a sentence of Jesus in such shape as oral teaching had caused it to assume. And the words so

¹ Matt. v. 17.

preserved were part of a book containing that "other law" by which the Christian teacher was guided, and prepared to give his guidance to others. Such a book can hardly have been anything else than the Gospel in Hebrew.

Accepting this conclusion, there are a few reflections which may be made upon it in reference to those Gospels which have been preserved to us. No doubt the early Church selected for circulation, and for insertion in the canon of Scripture, those narratives of the life of Jesus which were stamped with the greatest authority, and had gained the widest acceptance in the Church, and that in them we have a faithful picture of such events in the life of our Saviour as they deal with. But the earliest of the Synoptic Gospels was probably not put into its present form for a quarter of a century after the Crucifixion. Notes of discourses may have been, and most probably were, preserved from the first; but there were no doubt many circumstances related by the apostles to their first congregations which have not been included in any Gospel. And we can easily understand how variations in reported narratives may go to much greater extent than the difference between the passage of St. Matthew and the Version which the *Philosophus* of the Talmud seems to have had, without there being any designed deviation from a correct report. The variations therefore which we find in the narratives of the Evangelists ought not to weaken their credit in any degree, for verbal accord was not what their writers desired to attain. Each from his own point of view wished to present Christ as He lived, and to give to others the impression which had been produced upon himself.

And it was, no doubt, well for the truthfulness of the picture that the histories were not written down as soon as possible after the Crucifixion. The lapse of a few years allowed each event to assume its proper significance in the minds of the apostles; whereas, at the moment of its utterance, each word of Him who "spake as never man spake" would seem to demand a record, and each action as it was done. But what we have now is such a collection of memoirs as enables us, without having every word of Jesus registered and every deed chronicled, to see the spirit of all that He did; and his life is such that, when we come elsewhere on a saying which must apparently be attributed to Him, like this of the Talmud—"A son and a daughter shall inherit alike"—though we have not the words in a Gospel, we can feel that they are such words as might have been uttered by the Jesus whose history our Gospels record. The Gospels teach us the spirit of Christ, and the spirit of Christ is Christianity.

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BRIEF NOTICES.

CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE HOLY GOSPELS. Vol. I. St. Matthew and St. Mark. *By G. Constantinos.* This Commentary, which is written in modern Greek and published at Athens, is interesting as shewing the position of New Testament studies in the most flourishing centre of learning in the Greek Church. It is interesting, too, especially for Englishmen, as bearing considerable traces of the influence of English scholarship. The writers most prominently quoted seem to be Alford and Wordsworth, and it is possibly something more than a coincidence that the German writers whose names are mentioned have all had their works translated into English. By the side of these modern writers the other most important element in the Commentary is that which is supplied by the Greek Fathers, Chrysostom, the Gregories, Theo-