

We maintain, therefore, that Jesus Christ is the Logos of God and, at the same time, that, because He has emptied Himself of the form of God and assumed instead of it the form of a servant, the divine perfection and greatness, which have now become His own ideal, are to be won by Him as the reward of human efforts and suffering. This is the addition made by the Epistle to the Hebrews to the theology of the incarnation.

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THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN THE TALMUD.

My apology for drawing attention to a subject that is so offensive to Christian feeling as the dicta of the Jews with regard to our Lord and His Mother, must be found in scientific necessity and a desire for historical enlightenment. I have not the least wish to provoke a feeling of resentment against the ancient people of God on account of their hostility to the Christian faith and its Founder. Whatever we may think of the first forms of that hostility, its continuance and intensification are largely due to the injustice which they have suffered at the hands of priests and princes, and which they are in many places still suffering. The wonder is, not that the Jews should have hated the Christians, but that they should not have hated them more. And certainly we have not the smallest thought of hindering the coming reconciliation, of which there are so many signs in our own time, by dwelling upon distasteful or offensive language of earlier days.

But we must not neglect any branch of study which may throw light upon the genesis of modern beliefs; and it seems probable that renewed study of the Talmud may bring us unexpected scientific results. So large a mountain ought to produce more than the proverbial mouse. We

should not be content with saying that its chronology is baseless and its legends inexplicable, and that nothing can be added therefrom to the history of the world's beliefs except a little local or ecclesiastical colour, by which the parables of the Founder of the Christian faith or the ritual of His followers may be made more intelligible. A modern critic will certainly not be satisfied with such a poverty of results.

There are signs of renewed activity and of fresh results in the study of the Talmud. Two modern tracts are before me which are an evidence of this; both of them are written, in the first instance, as religious polemics; but they may help to take us further than polemics. The one is Professor Pranaitis' Collection of Jewish Statements affecting Christ and Christianity (*Christianus in Talmude Iudæorum*, Petropoli, 1892); the other Mr. Streane's translation of Laible's *Christus im Talmud* (Camb., 1893). The latter work, especially, in consequence of Mr. Streane's able presentation, has attracted a good deal of notice. I have learnt something from both these books, and the latter has been especially instructive to me.

At the same time one lays down Laible's book with a feeling of disappointment if not of resentment. The author is often as artificial as he professes to find his sources to be, and indulges in the most far-fetched explanations in order to elucidate his Talmudical riddles. What are we to think of a defender of Christianity who tells us that the reason why the Talmud attributes five disciples to our Lord lies in the fact that Christ had five wounds, and who quotes a verse of a German hymn to the five wounds in support of his explanation?

But it is just because so much of this work (and something of the same kind is true of Pranaitis) is unsatisfactory that one is anxious that when real results have been arrived at, or at all events adumbrated, by these two Talmud

scholars, they should not be lost sight of, although so much else that may be brought forward is *nihil ad rem*.

I propose, therefore, to make one or two remarks which will show what the Jews thought of the mother of our Lord, and help us to understand the Talmudic treatment of that subject.

In my *Apology of Aristides* I have already explained why Jesus is called in the Talmud the son of a mythical Roman soldier, Pandera, the name being an anagram of the Greek Parthenos (the Virgin), as had already been seen by Nitzsch, though I was not aware of his explanation, upon which I had lighted independently. I only allude to it here by way of reminding the student that the Talmud will not be intelligible unless we understand the use of anagram, of Gematria, and similar literary devices; assonance, too, and the substitution of corresponding letters for one another must also be watched for, if we are to get at the back of the texts as they now stand. I do not profess to be much of a Talmudic scholar, but at least I know enough to make these preliminary instructions.

We will now discuss one or two Talmudic references to the Virgin Mary. The first describes our Lord as—

THE SON OF MARY, THE WOMAN'S HAIRDRESSER.

Suppose, then, we have to deal with those statements in the Talmud which tell us that Jesus was the Son of Mary, the woman's hairdresser. Is this history or is it romance? According to Laible, the Talmud (*Shabbath*, 10*b*, and other places) expressly makes this statement; and Laible's explanation is that the Jews had heard Christians speak of Mary Magdalene, who was a great sinner, and that they (i.) identified her with the blessed Virgin; (ii.) interpreted the name Magdalene to be *Megaddela*, i.e., the woman plaiting, from whence it was easy to deduce the last form of the statement, that the mother of Jesus was a wicked

woman, who was engaged in the not very honourable occupation of dressing other women's hair. Thus by a parody, says Laible, out of Miriam, the woman of Magdala, there came Miriam, a woman's hairdresser.

Now I imagine that to most readers this will sound very fanciful; they will not think it likely that the Jews should have confused our Lord's disciple with his mother, nor will they think that this ingenious derivation can have been involved in the simple statement of Mary's daily occupation. And if history is presented in this way, with such conscious and unconscious confusion, they will despair of history. Nevertheless, it may be shown that on both points Laible is right, and we shall point out from a study of Christian documents, (i.) that Mary Magdalene was explained as the plaiting woman; (ii.) that she was commonly identified with the blessed Virgin. For both points we turn to the Syrian fathers, who are known to have had such close relations with Judaism, not only because they were contiguous to Palestine, and nearly consanguine and almost absolutely collingual with the Jews, but because they kept up friendly relations with the Jews who dwelt amongst them long after the Western world had finally broken the ancient ties.

Now the Syrian commentators are much exercised to explain why Mary Magdalene was so called; they did not apparently know of any town of Magdala to which to refer her (though, if they had known of such a place, they certainly would not have shared Laible's fanciful theory that the Jews were unwilling to allow that the mother of Jesus was born in a place whence so many famous rabbis were sprung); but they speculated as to what *tower (migdol)* it could be that she was named after. Some said it was the tower of Astrat (Cæsarea Stratonis), some the tower of Siloam; some suggested that she built herself a tower by the wages of infamy, and lived therein; others that she

built a mystical tower of righteousness through her penitence, on which she ascended to heaven. Let us hear now the summary which Bar-Salibi gives of the philological investigation. "She was called Magdalene because she inhabited the tower of Astrat, or the tower of Shiloah; or from *plaited*, because *her hair was plaited*."

Here then we have the very derivation which Laible has assumed in his explanation of the Talmudic statement that Jesus was the son of Miriam, the woman's hairdresser. So that we may boldly replace the words "woman's hairdresser" by the name Magdalene, from which they are derived. Jesus, therefore, according to the Talmud, was the Son of Mary Magdalene.

Now, for the second point, we must not be too hard on the Jews if we find that they have made a mistaken identification which is shared with them by the Syrian Fathers. It is a strange mistake to us, because time and teaching, homiletics and Christian art have differentiated the two most famous of the Marys. But in the beginning this was not so. We shall show first that so careful a student of Scripture as Ephrem Syrus made the same confusion in his Commentary upon the Diatessaron.

For example, we find him saying (ed. Mösinger, p. 54), when discussing the precipitancy of Mary's conduct at the marriage feast in Cana, that the same undue haste was shown after the resurrection. "*Ita et post victoriam ab eo de inferis reportatam quum mater eum videret, qua mater eum amplexari voluit.*" The reference is clearly to the scene in the garden where the Magdalene would have held our Lord by the feet, and was deterred by the words, "Touch me not." A more striking case of the same confusion (p. 29) will be found in the comment upon the words, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." The passage is somewhat obscure in Mösinger, partly through bad editing, and partly, perhaps, because it has been some-

what changed in the course of its transmission. According to Mösinger, then, we read :

Pertransibit gladius, i.e., negatio. Sed Græcus clare dicit : Revelentur in multis cordibus cogitationes nimirum eorum qui dubitabant. (Et quod dicit : *Pertransibit gladius*, i.e., et tu dubitabis ; quia scilicet [Maria] credit eum esse hortulanum). Admirabatur enim, aiunt, Maria et de nativitate et de conceptione et quare peperit, et nonnulli, admirantes verbum eius, confortabantur ; alii vero erant, qui de dubitarent.

Here Mösinger brackets a whole sentence on the ground that the words are a gloss ; wrongly, as we shall see, for they contain a key word to the understanding of the comment, viz., the word *dubitabis*, which recurs in the latter part of the quotation, and was, doubtless, in some form or other, a part of Tatian's text. So that, if there is a gloss in the passage, it is the words which tell us that the reading of the Greek is "that thoughts in many hearts may be revealed." Setting this on one side, we have an underlying text to the effect "that there shall be doubts in many hearts," with a comment upon it to the effect that the sword which pierced Mary's heart was doubt. For (i.) she doubted whether he was the gardener ; (ii.) she spoke of the marvels of her personal experience ; some marvelled with her and some *doubted*.

The confusion then, in Ephrem's mind, between Mary Magdalene and the Blessed Virgin is sufficiently obvious.¹

We have now shown that so great a teacher as Ephrem was capable of making the identification of Mary Mag-

¹ It is very interesting to find that the Syrian commentator, Isho'dad, reproduces this comment of Ephrem, along with the underlying text of Tatian, which has dropped out in the Armenian, for he says as follows :

"*Mar Ephrem*. The sword shall pass through thy own soul also that there may be divided [or, may doubt] many cogitations from the hearts, those namely that doubted ; i.e., thou also shalt doubt concerning Him, for she was astonished at His marvels and told them to others, and they were set free from doubts concerning Him."

Isho'dad, however, omits the confusion between the two Marys.

dalene and the mother of Jesus; and we need not then wonder if we find a similar confusion in the Talmud. It appears, therefore, that Laible has rightly interpreted the Talmudic references to the woman's hairdresser who was the mother of Jesus. I pass on to another passage—

THE VIRGIN MARY IN HELL.

Laible quotes, though without pressing an identification, a passage in the Talmud which represents a certain Mary as tormented in hell. Indeed Laible does not think an identification possible of this Mary with the Virgin. His language is as follows :

The Talmud itself makes it clear that this Mary is not the mother of Jesus: otherwise it would have substituted a different transgression on her part from that of an irreligious practice of fasting. In the Jerusalem *Chagiga*, 77d, a devout person relates that he saw in a dream various punishments in hell. He saw also Miriam, the daughter of Eli Betzalim, suspended, as R. Lazar ben Jose says, by the paps of her breasts. R. Jose ben Chanina says, the hinge of hell's gate was fastened in her ear. He said to them [? the angels of punishment], why is this done to her? The answer was, because she fasted and published the fact. Others said, because she fasted one day, and counted two days (of feasting) as a set off. He asked them, "How long shall she be so? They answered him, until Shim'ou ben Shetach comes; then we shall take it out of her ear and put it in his ear.

This extraordinary passage certainly requires some elucidation, for it is extremely improbable that the Talmud should make mention of special torments assigned to a woman who had made some error in the matter of fasting. Who is this Miriam, the daughter of Eli Betzalim? The first clue lies in the fact that in the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, which was often said to be Mary's genealogy, the first stage is *Heli*. And a little scrutiny will show that the perplexing Betzalim is only a disguise (perhaps to avoid the Censor of the Inquisition) of the words, *Im tzalib, the mother of the crucified*. We therefore read the passage thus: He saw Miriam, the daughter of

Eli, the mother of the crucified, suspended by the paps of her breasts.

Having made this explanation, much that follows is clear: she is hanged by the breasts, as a curse antithetic to the blessing in the gospel which a woman in the crowd uttered with regard to the mother of Christ. And further, the hinge of the gate of hell is fastened in her ear, because in the early legends of the Incarnation the conception of Christ was through the ear of the Virgin. Mr. Conybeare has brought forward in his letters to the *Academy* so many instances of this early belief that it is almost superfluous to add to them. But those who are interested in the subject may perhaps care to be reminded that this view of the conception is very common in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (*e.g.*, Wright, *Syriac Acts of John*, p. 14, He entered by the ear of the woman; p. 26, He entered by the ear of the Virgin; p. 33, He entered by the ear of the Virgin Mary, etc.).

So much being clear, we have now to consider the crime for which Mary was tormented, "she fasted and published it." I feel morally certain that there is some anagram or esoteric meaning underlying this word "fasted"; but at present I do not see what the word is; and so must be content to leave the matter. The Talmud has many secrets to tell if we only had the key to its language and expression; as far, however, as we have gone in the two or three instances before us, we do not seem to have arrived at any fresh sources for the actual history. We do, however, arrive at some very interesting results with regard to the opinions of the Jews. They seem to be second-hand reflections from Christian beliefs. The Pandera story was provoked by the honour which Christians paid to the Virgin at a very early period. The confusion between Mary Magdalene and the Blessed Virgin appears to have been due, in the first instance, to Christian misinterpretation of

the Gospels. The torment of Mary in hell shows signs of the influence of the genealogy in Luke, and almost takes the miraculous birth for a fact ; otherwise why the torment, and why the hinge of hell in her ear? So that if we do not extract the history of events, we make a real contribution to the history of opinions.

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JEREMIAH: THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE.

V. RETRIBUTION.

JEREMIAH may be said to have been the conscience of his generation. The consciences of his contemporaries were blunted and seared, and this was the reason of their ruin ; but, as in an ill-doing family there may be a brother or sister in whose gentle heart all the shame and pain accumulate which the others do not feel, so the prophet was the sensitive centre in which the sin of the age was fully felt.

One function of the conscience is to reveal the moral ideal ; and Jeremiah held up to his fellow-countrymen the image of their own life as God intended it to be. Another function of conscience is, when the ideal is infringed, to insist on the wrong which has been committed ; and Jeremiah was so incessantly pointing to the particular faults by which the law of God was contravened that we can still see in his pages all the abuses of the time. But conscience has a further function : when sin has been committed, it gives warning of punishment ; and perhaps the most prominent feature in the work of Jeremiah is the denunciation of Divine retribution about to fall on those who have sinned.

The truth is written on every human conscience that