

adapted the wonderful beam. They showed what had been done to all around, and the place was called Christchurch from that time forward.

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills, and the plains,  
Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?  
Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit  
may meet;  
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

It is said that Lord Craven lived in London when the plague raged. His house was in that part of the city since called Craven buildings. On the plague growing epidemic, his lordship, to avoid the danger, resolved to go to his seat in the country. His coach-and-six was accordingly at the door, his baggage put up, and all things in readiness for the journey. As he was walking through the hall with his hat on, his cane under his arm, and putting on his gloves, in order to step into his carriage, he overheard his negro saying to another servant, 'I suppose, by my lord's quitting London to avoid the plague, that his god lives in the country and not in town.' The poor negro said this in the simplicity of his heart, as really believing in a plurality of gods. The speech, however, struck Lord Craven very sensibly, and made him pause. 'My God,' thought he, 'lives everywhere, and can preserve me in town as well as in the country. I'll even stay where I am.' He immediately ordered his horses to be taken from the coach, and the luggage to be brought in.

He continued in London, was remarkably useful among his sick neighbours, and never caught the infection.

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## The Destruction of the Original of Ecclesiasticus.

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THAT the so-called 'Original of Ecclesiasticus' contains portions of two translations of Ecclesiasticus made from the Syriac and a daughter version of the Greek, has been repeatedly asserted by the present writer, and the arguments adduced by Professor Nestle in the article 'Sirach' in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary* are quite sufficient to prove the point. It is, however, of interest to prove it from the evidence of the literature of the Jews.

A definite statement concerning the destruction of the original of Ben-Sira's work is to be found in a passage of the Babylonian Gemara, rescued from oblivion by Rabinowicz in his *Various Readings*, ix. 304. A form of the text preserved by three authorities there runs thus—  
אֵי לֹא דִגְנוּ רַבֵּן-  
לְהָא בִפְרָא כִי הִנֵּי מִלֵּי מַעֲלִייתָא דְרַבִּי בֵּיה דְרִשְׁנֵי לְהוּ  
'had not our Rabbis destroyed this book (Ben-

Sira's), we should expound the valuable texts that are therein.'

Of the three books which contain this sentence, one, the commentary of Abu'l-'Afiyah, was printed at Salonica in 1798; the others are less accessible. For the hypothetical clause, 'had not our Rabbis destroyed,' Rabinowicz approves of the conjecture 'although our Rabbis destroyed.' But does לְהוּ mean 'to destroy'? To find out what sort of operation is meant by it, it is best to examine the passages in which it occurs. In a tradition about king Hezekiah (*Pesachim*, 56a, *Berachoth*, 10b, *Ḳamḥi* on 2 K 20<sup>3</sup>), he is praised for having *ganaz'd* a book of medical prescriptions. This, says Rashi, is because the people used to rely on the prescriptions instead of seeking the Lord in their hearts. R. Maimonides renders the word

*ganaz* by the Arabic *azāla*, 'caused to cease.' The matter is of consequence to him, for he wrote medical books himself, and therefore is at pains to show that the book *ganaz'd* by Hezekiah was a book of unlawful prescriptions. It does not occur to Maimonides that the word can mean anything less than 'destroy.' Had it meant 'set aside for the use of certain privileged persons,' Maimonides would not be compelled to defend the act on the ground that the book contained unlawful matter.

*Pesachim*, 62b: 'Rami son of Judah said: "From the day on which the Book of Genealogies was *ganaz'd*, the strength of the wise became enfeebled, and the light of their eyes grew dim.'" Rashi renders *ganaz'd* 'was forgotten,' in accordance with his theory that such a book could not have been written. This is an error with reference to the time before the rule against writing anything but *mikrā*; for in *Yebamoth*, 49a, we read that R. Simon B. Uzzai found a genealogical roll at Jerusalem. Rashi's opinion is, however, in accordance with the Gemara (*l.c.*). 'R. Shamlai came before R. Jochanan: he said, "Let my lord recite to me the Book of Genealogies."—He said, "We do not recite."' Yet it is clear that the day whereon it was *ganaz'd* cannot mean the day on which it was *forgotten*, since that process would occupy many days; but the day whereon it was destroyed. And the process was one which took the book out of the reach of the wise as well as the unwise.

Of the process of destruction we get a vivid account in *Sabbath* 115a. (Tosefta *ibid.* sec. 14). 'A copy of the Targum of Job was brought before R. Gamliel: he ordered the builder to sink it under the foundations.' R. Jose B. Jehudah says a trough full of clay was passed over it. 'This statement occasions difficulty: is it permitted to destroy such books by the hand? Rather they are to be left in a place where they will perish, and so they rot or perish of themselves.' The difficulty, then, is not as to the ultimate fate of such books—that in any case is certain; it is only whether nature should be left to do all the work, or should be assisted.

The passage is of interest as containing a definite statement concerning the fate of Ben-Sira's book. Since it had been destroyed, the quotations from it in the Talmud could *only have been preserved by oral tradition*; and indeed this was obvious from their nature to men of modern critical ability, such as the retranslator Ben-Zev. It assigns to Ben-

Sira sayings which are not his; it assigns sayings of his to others; and reproduces with extreme inaccuracy the genuine sayings which it correctly ascribes to him. This phenomenon is explicable on the ground that there was no existing original by which the quotations could from time to time be checked; explicable on no other supposition.

The study of these quotations leads, however, to results of interest besides confirming the assertion of the Gemara that the book had been destroyed. The Mishnah which leads to the discussion in the B. Gemara is to the effect that, 'according to R. Akiba, whoever read in the *exoteric* books forfeited eternal life.' The ground for this doctrine is not given in the Bab. Talmud, but is preserved in the Midrash R. on Numbers, sec. 14. Eccles 12<sup>12</sup> is thus interpreted by the Midrash: 'and more than these, my son, beware against making many books: no end': *i.e.* whosoever adds to the twenty-four books is to have no end, which is shown from Daniel to signify *eternal life*. Exoteric books must therefore in the original tradition have meant books outside the twenty-four. This sense of the phrase also appears very clearly in the Midrash R. on Numbers, sec. 15: "planted like courses of priests" (Eccles *l.c.*); hence the wise have said that it is unlawful to read in the exoteric books: just as the courses of priests are twenty-four, so the books are twenty-four.' There can be no doubt that in these passages *exoteric books* mean books that are not in the Canon.

On the other hand, in sec. 14 of the same Midrash, the phrase must mean something different. 'Whoever reads a verse that is not in the twenty-four books is as bad as if he read in the exoteric books.' If this sentence has a meaning, exoteric must mean something more than non-biblical.

The Jerusalem Gemara glosses the Mishnah thus: '*exoteric*: such as the books of Ben-Sira and the books of Ben-Laanaḥ.' It is an error to ascribe this gloss to R. Akiba, whose words it explains. The source of it is (confessedly) the Midrash on Eccles 12<sup>12</sup>, where the books of Ben-Sira and Ben-Tagla are taken as examples of books other than the twenty-four. Whether Laanaḥ or Tagla be the more correct form cannot easily be determined. The Bab. Gemara gives the phrase 'exoteric books' the sense 'books of the Christians'; 'he says books of the Christians': Rab Joseph says, 'even one who reads in Ben-

Sira's book.' The sense 'Christians' is rendered certain by Rashi's gloss. (See חסרונו הש"ס.)

The Jerusalem Talmud follows the Midrash not only in this place, but elsewhere when it speaks about Ben-Sira. A text of Ecclus is quoted in the story of Simeon Ben-Shetach (*Berachoth*, sec. 7, and *Nazir*, sec. 5). R. Nissim (about 1020 A.D.) states that the source of the story is the 'Genesis of R. Hosha'yah,' i.e. the Midrash Rabbah on Genesis (Nissim's *Maftach*, ed. Goldenthal, p. 22b). In another place in which Ben-Sira is quoted (*Hagigah*, sec. 2), the verse is quoted from 'R. Lazar in the name of Ben-Sira.' The Midrash R. on Genesis also quotes the same verse from 'R. Eleazar in the name of Ben-Sira.' Of course, if Ben-Sira's book had been accessible, the Midrash would not have quoted the verse from R. Eleazar. The formula 'in the name of' belongs to the oral tradition (Arabic 'an). That in this case the Jer. Talmud gets the verse from the Midrash is confirmed by the fact that the Midrash is much nearer the original. The latter quotes Ecclus 3<sup>20, 21</sup> thus (sec. 8): 'Into what is too great for thee search not, into what is too strong for thee pry not, about what is too wonderful for thee know not, about what is hidden from thee ask not; about that over which authority has been given thee consider: for thou hast no business with hidden things.' The Jer. Talmud interpolates the verses from Job 11<sup>8</sup>, 'It is too hard for thee, what dost thou know? Deeper than hell, what canst thou search? About that over which,' etc. Between the tradition of the Midrash and that of the Jer. Talmud there is then a considerable degeneration. And this degeneration has taken the form of assimilating the quotations from Ecclus, which the oral tradition preserved, to the form of verses of Scripture. We shall presently see some other examples of the same phenomenon.

R. Eleazar is the authority for another quotation from Ben-Sira, *Midr. Tanchuma* i. 51, 'Rabbi Eleazar says: "It is written in the book of Ben-Sira," אוקיר לאסיר עד שלא הצטרך ליה.' The verse is an Aramaic paraphrase of 38. 1. The words are reproduced in *J. Td'anith* iii. 6, as a saying of R. Lazar. In *Midr. Rabbah Exodus*, sec. 21 (ed. Vilna 81b), it is given in Hebrew as a proverb on the authority of R. Eleazar B. Pedath.

We are fortunate in this case to be able to trace the depravation of the tradition. As elsewhere, the Midrash Rabbah has the best form; the Jer.

tradition is much worse. R. Eleazar (B. Pedath) is the source of the Ben-Sira references which the latter contains, and in this last case his name by a natural error is substituted for Ben-Sira's. He appears to have lived early in the *third* century A.D., and, from the fact that verses of Ben-Sira are quoted *on his authority*, we may conclude that the original of Ecclus was destroyed either during or before his time. To Jerome's assertion that he had seen the original of Ecclus of course no importance can be attached, since he made no use of the original for his edition of the Latin.

All the Talmudic quotations are of interest, and all testify loudly that they come from an oral tradition which there was no means of checking. In this article we have only room for three.

One of these runs thus: 'Take no thought for the morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth: perhaps to-morrow comes and he is not, and is found to have troubled himself about a world that is not his.' This can be analysed with ease. 'Take no thought for the morrow' is a saying not of Jesus Ben-Sira, but of *Jesus the son of Mary* (Mt 6<sup>34</sup>). The similarity of the names caused this confusion. The fact that the clause ended with the word 'to-morrow' recalled Pr 27<sup>1</sup>, 'boast not of the morrow,' leading to the tag, 'for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,' which constitutes the second half of the verse of Proverbs, being appended. But some one observed that our ignorance of what a day might bring forth was not a reason for not being anxious, but rather a ground for anxiety; he therefore added the comment, 'perhaps,' etc., which, by the change from the second to the third person, betrays itself as a comment, and no part of the original saying. This then gives us an excellent illustration of the course taken by oral tradition when there are no texts by which it can be checked. First, the saying of one Jesus is assigned to another; next, to this saying there is appended a half-verse from Scripture, owing to *homoeoteleuton*, i.e. the clause ending with the same word as that with which a clause of Scripture terminates; and then, owing to a resulting discrepancy, a comment is attached and regarded as part of the original saying. Of course, had there been any texts current, this process would have been nipped in the bud.

Another saying that is assigned to Ben-Sira has also an interesting history. In *Ketuboth* 110b the context suggests the question, How comes it that

a change from a bad dwelling to a good dwelling is trying? To this the following answer is given: 'This view agrees with the opinion of Samuel (an authority of the third century), that a change of habit is the commencement of internal disease. For it is written in the book of Ben-Sira, "All the days of the poor are evil." But has he not Sabbaths and Feast-days? This is as Samuel says, "Change of habit is the commencement of internal disease." Ben-Sira says, "even the nights; his roof is below other men's rooves, and his vineyard is at the top of the mountains; the rain from other men's rooves drips on his, and the soil from his vineyard is washed down upon other men's."

This passage is very evidently confused. In *Baba Bathra* 146a the whole is put in the mouth of R. Joshua Ben-Levi (second century). The verse, 'All the days of the poor are evil,' is, of course, not Ben-Sira's but from Pr 15<sup>15</sup>. To this R. Joshua objects that since even the poor has Sabbaths and Feast-days, *all* his days are not evil; there are those exceptions. To this the answer is given, 'It is as Samuel says: Change of habit is the commencement of internal disease.' Since the Feast-day represents a change of habit to the poor man, it is bad for him, though in itself good; the change from his ordinary wretchedness makes these days bad too. 'Ben-Sira says the nights too; his roof,' etc. In *Sanhedrin*, R. Joshua's criticism and Samuel's reply are put at a distance from the quotation from Ben-Sira.

It is clear that we have two independent comments on the verse of Proverbs. R. Joshua thought Solomon had said too much; some one else thought he had not said enough. But the oral tradition was in the first place mistaken in assigning this second criticism to Ben-Sira. What Ben-Sira *does* say (40. 5c) is that *man*, besides being troubled all day, gets no rest at night. The oral tradition wrongly connected this saying with the *poor*, by a chain that can no longer be traced. It is next obvious that the saying about the poor man's roof and his vineyard could not be an illustration of the trouble which the poor man suffers at *night*; even Rashi is struck by this. Indeed, we do not usually associate the idea of poverty with that of the possession of rooves and vineyards; this saying therefore probably had no original connexion with the subject of poverty at all. Hence the only connexion of Ben-Sira with this passage is that he in one place says the

equivalent of 'even the nights.' In *Sanhedrin*, Ben-Sira is made to comment on the verse of Proverbs; in *Ketuboth* the verse of Proverbs is itself quoted as Ben-Sira's.

In *Berachoth* 48a the story of Simeon Ben-Shetach is told. This person, taking his seat between two royalties, ascribed his good fortune to the Law on the faith of the verse of Scripture, 'hold her up and she will exalt thee, and set thee between princes.' The first half of this verse is Pr 4<sup>8</sup>, but where was the second half to be found? This question was addressed to R. Hay Gaon (about 1000 A.D.: *Responsa Gaonum*, Berlin, 1848, p. 23b), who made a variety of suggestions. He was aware that some said the verse was Ben-Sira's, doubtless on the authority of the Midr. Rabbah. This, of course, involved the difficulty of Ben-Sira being quoted as Scripture, and the printed text of *B. Berachoth* has solved it by omitting the second clause and substituting for it the second clause from Proverbs; whereas the text before Rashi simply omitted the second clause. Another method (recorded by Rabbinowicz) was to introduce the second clause from Proverbs, and retain the clause, 'and set thee between princes,' as an explanation of the words, 'she shall honour thee,' in the second clause of Proverbs. But in all the comments on this passage, from the time of Hay Gaon to the printing of the Talmud, there is no trace of any Rabbi having consulted Ben-Sira's book to see what was actually there; for, indeed, there was no such original to consult.

The history of this quotation is, of course, the following. The original story made Simeon Ben-Shetach quote Ben-Sira to account for his sitting between princes; and as the point of the story lay in this second clause, 'She shall set thee between princes,' it was preserved in the oral tradition. But the verse of which it forms the second member runs as follows (Ecclus 11<sup>1</sup>): 'The wisdom of the lowly shall raise his head and set him between princes.' For the first clause (which like all Ben-Sira's genuine verses is in nine syllables with three accents) the oral tradition substituted the clause from Proverbs, 'hold her up and she will exalt thee,' there being nothing in the story calculated to preserve the first clause as the second had been preserved. When the tradition began to assume a permanent form, some identified the first clause as belonging to Proverbs and threw out Ben-Sira's name, after which the second clause had also to go.