was beginning to be. "Behold I make all things new."

(2) How calmly He takes it all. Nothing surprises, scandalizes, or disgusts Him, though He sees more clearly than any other the things which offend others. That calmness is the fruit of wisdom united with unexampled charity.

(3) Yet how magnanimously He bears Himself towards the doubters. "Violence"—the very word is an excuse for their doubt. No great wonder that men of honest worth should stand in doubt in presence of a revolution with all the boisterous energy and fermentation of thought characteristic of creative epochs. What wonder if a man of gentle meditative spirit like Archbishop Leighton should find it hard to adjust himself to the parties and movements of the confused troublous times in which he lived! One who feels himself isolated and perplexed in such an age may thereby shew himself to be weak, but he is not on that account to be deemed wicked. Thus did Jesus judge his contemporaries, who were perplexed by the "violence," unregulated energy, fermentations of opinion, innovation in action they saw all around them. His worst thought and speech about them was that they were *children*.

A. B. BRUCE.

THE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE ORAL LAW.

THE Gospels recount several occasions on which our Lord came into direct conflict with the principles of the Oral Law. I will briefly touch on these, and then will proceed to shew, in far less familiar mat-

ters of detail, the utter emptiness and hollowness of the system, the utter death and corruption of that meaningless ceremonialism which called down his ultimate judgments, and more than deserved his scathing denunciation.

1. The custom of washing the hands before a meal was not only a cleanly and desirable one, but was rendered absolutely necessary by the habits of the East, which involve the dipping of all hands into a common dish. But it is obvious that occasions would arise in which the nature of a meal, which might consist of dry bread and fruit—or some pressing urgency—or some difficulty of obtaining water at the moment, might render the custom impossible. For some such reason—and even Talmudists admit that handwashing (*nitilath yadaîm*) is needless if the hands be clean—the disciples had neglected to observe the traditional prescription; and instantly the Pharisees are — and that on grounds professedly sacred—as indignant as though the accidental non-observance of a custom were little less heinous than the deliberate commission of a crime. They had elevated ablutions, and even the minutest regulations about the method of performing them, into a matter of religion. A whole order (*seder*) of the Talmud — that called *Taharôth*, or Purifications — is devoted to washings; and two separate tracts of it, *Mikvâoth*, or "baths," and *Yadaîm*, or "handwashings," deal especially with cleansings of the person. These ablutions were extended to all kinds of objects, and in later days were accompanied by elaborate liturgies of recognized prayers. Indeed, so ultra-Pharisaic was this branch of Pharisaism, that

it originated the jest of the Sadducees, who, seeing their opponents washing the Golden Candlestick, said that soon they would not be content until they could wash the Sun!

There are various stories in the Talmud in exaltation of the practice of ablutions. One[1] is about Rabbi Jose and Rabbi Juda, and how they entrusted their property to an innkeeper, to take care of for them during the Sabbath. Next morning he entirely denied all knowledge of the circumstance. In talking with him, however, they observed a pea in his beard, and going off to his wife, told her that her husband desired her to restore their property, and to mention, as a token of the genuineness of the message, the fact that he had had peas for dinner. Recognizing the fact, the wife returned the goods, and her husband afterwards beat her to death for it. The Talmudist seems rather to commend than otherwise the acute falsehood of the Rabbis. At any rate he does not breathe a single word of censure upon it, but uses the story to shew the disadvantage of neglecting ablutions, since, if the man had washed his beard after the meal, the pea would not have been there!

In another tract they mention the frightful fact that, by not washing his hands before a meal, a Jew was mistaken for a Christian, and so actually partook without knowing it, of swine's flesh!

In the treatise *Erubhîn*[2] they tell how, when Rabbi Akibha was undergoing his last imprisonment, Rabbi Joshua usually brought him enough water to wash in, and enough to drink. On one occasion,

[1] Joma, viii. f. 83, 2; Buxtorf, Synag. Jud. p. 237.
[2] Erubhîn, ii. f. 21, 2; Buxtorf, *ubi super.*

however, the gaoler had drunk half the water, and although Akibha saw that there was not enough water for him to drink, he still exclaimed, "Give me water to wash my hands." "But," said Joshua, "there is not enough, Master, even for you to drink." Said Akibha, "He who eats with unwashen hands commits a crime deserving of death: better that I should kill myself with thirst, than that I should transgress the traditions of my fathers." Could there be a clearer illustration how utterly the Jews had failed to realize the precious truth of which they had for centuries been in possession, that "mercy is better than sacrifice"?

It is almost impossible not to suppose that this story of Rabbi Akibha's ceremonial scrupulosity is narrated with express reference to the narrative of St. Mark; and if so, it shews how little the Jews had been shaken in their allegiance to the mummy of their traditional formalism, and how little they had understood, or taken to heart, the noble lesson which our Lord uttered on this occasion, that all true pollution comes not from without, but from within.

2. Of the conflicts of the Pharisees with Christ about the Sabbath I need not here speak, but in my "Life of Christ" I have repeatedly endeavoured to elucidate the subject, and to shew that there were no less than *six* memorable disputes on this question, and that they occupied nearly the whole period of our Lord's ministry. What grieved the heart of Jesus was the fact that the pride, the emptiness, the dull apprehension of the leaders of his race, should have gradually succeeded in imposing upon the

people a heavy and meaningless burden in lieu of a divine and priceless boon; so that by an iron network of minute trivialities, in which they had entangled the national conscience, they should have substituted a revolting bondage for a perfect and kindly rest. Alike the command of God and his purpose had been broad and obvious. The *command* had been "to keep my Sabbaths and to reverence my sanctuary;" the *purpose* had been to turn away men's hearts from the greed of Mammon, and to disburden them for a time from the weariness of toil. The Pharisees had refined and systematized until they had changed a day which God had intended for "a delight, holy to the Lord, and honourable," into a weary interspace of dull vacuity, coarse gluttony, and anxious scruple. Out of a merciful, simple, intelligible mandate, they had constructed thirty-nine *abhôth*, or primary commands, and perfectly endless *toldôth*, or derivative commands, of which many were puerile and many perfectly senseless. For instance, because threshing was forbidden by one of the *abhôth*, plucking corn was inferentially rendered illegal by one of the *toldôth*. Curdling milk on the Sabbath was forbidden, as a kind of building; and to walk on stilts, or to wear a false tooth, or to have a needle about one's person, or to give a letter to a heathen which he might conceivably carry on the Sabbath, were all forbidden by the same rule which forbade that bearing of burdens which had cost his life to the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath in the wilderness. And while Hillel was content with confining Sabbatism to persons, Shammai extended it to animals, and even to

things inanimate; so that it was a violation of the Sabbath if a man allowed his fowls to have a riband round their legs, or his nets to continue in a stream, or his lamp to burn on unquenched on the Sabbath day. How utterly Christ laid his axe at the root of all these commandments of men; how absolutely opposed was his saying, that "*the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,*" to the conceptions of several generations of Scribes and Pharisees, Sopherim and Tanaim, it is needless further to narrate.

3. Very instructive, again, in illustration of the history of Pharisaism, is the utterly preposterous development which the system gave to the rule respecting Fringes, a development which we will now briefly trace.

(1) Moses, in Numb. xv. 38, had laid down the broad and intelligible rule that the children of Israel were to make fringes (*tsîtsîth*) at the "wings," or corners of their garments, and to put upon them a thread[1] of blue, that they might look upon it, and remember the commandment of the Eternal. The special symbolism of the *fringe* is no longer obvious, but Sir Gardner Wilkinson has shewn reason to believe that it was of Egyptian origin. The blue colour of the binding thread was an obvious reminder of the heavenly origin of the law, since blue was the natural and well understood emblem of heaven. Nor is there anything unreasonable in the tradition that the other threads were to be of white wool, the colour naturally standing as the emblem of purity and innocence. There was nothing servile and

[1] Not as in Authorized Version, "ribband."

superstitious in the use of a symbol so little burdensome, and our Lord Himself wore a fringed *talîth*,[1] though He did not, like the Pharisees, approve of the ostentatious amplitude of the ornament which they adopted in order to proclaim their scrupulous obedience to the Mosaic constitution.

But in the hands of the Scribes these fringes lost all their simplicity, and got mixed up with the most baseless fancies. The thread was to consist of four double threads of white wool, of which one thread was to be wound round the others—first, seven times with a double knot; then eight times with a double knot; then eleven times with a double knot; and, finally, thirteen times with a double knot. The reason of all this elaboration being that $7+8+11=26$, the numerical value of the letters of the word יהוה, *Yahveh*, or Jehovah; and 13 the numerical value of the word אחד, *achad*, "one," so that the number of windings represents the words, "*Jehovah is one*," and the five knots symbolize the books of the Pentateuch. Hence too is produced the notable result that the word *tsîtsîth*, which numerically represents 600, together with the eight threads and five knots, gives the number 613, which is also the number of the 248 affirmative and 365 negative precepts of the Law.

(2) And then, after all this mountainous mass of oral pedantry had been heaped on the simple Mosaic emblem, we are scarcely surprised to find that the importance attached to it became proportionately extravagant. Thus, since of these very numerous affirmative and negative precepts *all* could not be

[1] Matt. ix. 20.

of the same value, and since the Scribes were thus driven to classify some as "light" and some as "heavy," the question, which more than once was asked of our Lord, became a frequent subject of debate in the Jewish schools, namely, "Which was the great commandment of the law?" and no less a person than Rashi is bold enough to answer that the first and great commandment is that about fringes![1] And in the tract *Shabbath* we are told that Rabbi Joseph ben Rabba having been asked which commandment had been most strictly enjoined on him by his father, answered, "The law about fringes;" and proceeded to tell the well-known anecdote that on one occasion Rabba having accidentally stepped on his fringe and torn it while on a ladder, stayed where he was and would not move until it had been mended. Could the force of fetish-worship further go?

4. Exactly akin to the development of the rule about fringes is the history of Phylacteries, except that in the case of phylacteries there was far *less* original ground from which to start. But the smaller the apex, the broader was the inverted pyramid erected on it by the Rabbis; and the narrower the aperture, the wider was "the ever-widening spiral *ergo*" which they evolved from it.

(1) Of the question as to whether it was ever intended that phylacteries should be worn at all, the reader can judge for himself. In Exod. xiii. 9, after the institution of the Passover, Moses adds: "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law

[1] Rashi on Num. xv. 41.

may be in thy mouth." And in the 16th Verse, after mentioning the sanctification of the first-born to God, there follows, "And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes." In Deut. vi. 8, after general exhortations to obedience, the same passage precedes the verse, "And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates;" on which is founded the Jewish custom of using *mezuzôth*, or hollow cylinders containing these passages. The same injunctions are once more found, in a similar connection, in Deut. xi. 18.

Now opinions will probably differ as to the question whether these commands were to be taken literally or metaphorically. The arguments in favour of their literal significance are that the Jews have never doubted that the use of *mezuzôth*, at any rate, was literally enjoined; and that, as this precept about phylacteries accompanies it, the literal sense must also apply to them. But the only arguments which, as far as they go, seem to me really valid,[1] are those which (1) point out the affinity both of phylacteries and *mezuzôth* to already prevalent Oriental and especially to Egyptian customs — a consideration which is obviously traceable in the Mosaic legislation; and (2) those which adduce the ordinance of the *tsîtsîth* to shew that Moses was not indifferent to the beneficial influence which may be exercised by obvious and significant symbols on the mind of a half-educated people.

[1] The philological arguments usually adduced from the use of the words לְאוֹת, "for a sign" and לְמֹשֶׁן, "*that* the Law," &c., instead of וְ, *and*, are surely not conclusive.

Let these arguments be allowed their full weight; but they are at any rate *weakened* by the fact that (1) exactly similar exhortations are found in passages confessedly figurative, as in Prov. iii. 3, "Bind them round thy neck, write them on the tablet of thy heart;"[1] that (2) till a period long after the exile there is, so far as we are aware, *no shadow of a trace* of their use, which seems to shew that the earlier Jews attached no importance to them except in their figurative sense; and (3) that the passages inscribed upon them, which relate to the sanctification of the first-born and obedience to the law—though they have been ingeniously explained by the Kabbalists as indicating the wisdom, reason, grandeur, and power of God—are far from being the most significant or memorable that might have been selected. And on these grounds the Karaites—by no means the least sensible of Jewish sects—have always rejected the use of phylacteries. This, too, is the conclusion arrived at by St. Jerome, who says that the wearing of these precepts on the hand merely indicates "*ut opere compleantur*," and the wearing them on the head, "*ut nocte et die mediteris in illis.*"

If, however, we concede that Moses *may* have intended the freshly-liberated Jews to carry on their persons certain fragments of his legislation, how immense is the development which their general direction has received at the hands of the Scribes and Talmudists; how minute are the regulations which grew up respecting them, and how exaggerated the importance attached to the due fulfilment of the merely mechanical side of the command! And how

[1] Comp. Prov. vi. 21; vii. 31; Isa. xlix. 18.

clearly does this development illustrate once more the deadening effect produced upon the heart and conscience by an over-estimate of petty ritualisms.

(2) For, according to the Rabbis, every Israelite was to wear—originally at all times, and in later days during the hour of morning prayer—two kinds of *Tephillîn* or *Totaphôth*, as the prayer-boxes are called,—namely, the *Tephillîn shel Yad*, or phylacteries of the hand, and the *Tephillîn shel Rôsh*, or phylacteries of the head; the former to be bound above the elbow of the left arm, as being nearest to the heart, or seat of feeling; and the latter "above" (which was the Talmudic gloss for "between") the eyes, on the seat of the understanding. These were meant to indicate respectively the spiritual *power* and *crown* of Israel; the thongs which bound them being symbols of "the self-fettering by the Divine commands." Further, the phylactery of the head is to consist of a box (*bêth*) of black calf-skin, with four compartments, in each of which (not to trouble the reader with *all* the minutiæ which the Talmud lays down as necessary) is folded up a slip of parchment, on which is written one of the four passages, Exod. xiii. 1–10, 11–16; Deut. vi. 4–9; xi. 13–21. Each of these parchment strips is to be tied up with well-washed hair from the tail of a calf, lest, if tied with wool or thread, any fungoid growth should ever pollute them. On the outside is to be, on the right, the letter *Shin* (ש) with three prongs, to stand for the name *Shaddai*, the Almighty; and on the left, the same letter with *four* prongs. In tying on the phylactery of the arm, in which is to be a *single* slip of parchment, with the same four passages written in four columns of seven

lines each, the thong is first to be passed round the arm three times, so as to form the letter ש, then a knot is tied; then the thong is to have seven more twists (so as to form ש and שׁ) with another knot; the various steps of the process being accompanied with appropriate prayer. Much might be added, but this is enough to shew what extension was given by the Oral Law to a perfectly general command; and it was but natural that the extension should once more have led to the supernatural importance with which the wearing of phylacteries was invested. An extract from the Talmud will best prove this. "It is said in Exod. xxxiii. 23, 'I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts.' Rabbi Hana Bar-Bizna says, in the name of Rabbi Simon Hassîda, '*That proves that God revealed to Moses the proper way to make the knot of phylacteries.*'"[1] The reader may not perhaps see the point of the remark, even if he has seen phylacteries, and knows the shape of the quadrangular knot of the loop which binds them at the back of the head. What is, however, meant is that "*the Eternal Himself wears phylacteries*"[2]—a question discussed among the Rabbis

[1] Bab. Berachôth, f. 7*a* (Schwab. p. 247).

[2] This was proved as follows by Rabbi Abba Benjamin. In Isa. lxii. 8, God swears by his "*right hand*," and by the "*strength of his arm*." Now, "his right hand" represents the Law, as may be seen from Deut. xxxiii. 2, "From his right hand went forth a fiery law for them;" and the "strength of his arm" means the phylacteries, as appears from Psa. xxix. 11, "God gives strength to his people." Now strength is symbolized by the Tephillîn, as appears from Deut. xxviii. 10, "All the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and shall fear thee"—this fear-inspiring sign being, according to Rabbi Eliezer the Great, the *Tephillin shel Rôsh*. Rabbi Nachman Bar-Isaac asked Rabbi Hiya Bar-Abin what texts could be written on the phylacteries of God, and he and other Rabbis proceeded

quite as seriously as the scholastic one as to how many angels can dance upon a needle's point. The literal sense of this passage has, however, been found rather too shocking, and modern Jews explain "*the knot of the phylacteries*" to mean allegorically that "the Eternal, in revealing to Moses the object of creation, clearly demonstrated to him the mighty and unique power of the Creator in the order of his creation."

It has been denied by Dr. Ginsburg that the phylacteries were ever used as amulets; but as (1) he admits that *mezuzôth* were, as (2) this is a not improbable explanation of the *word* "phylactery," and as (3) it is in all ages and countries the *tendency* to use sacred words in this superstitious manner, I must demur to his assertion. And surely the amulet view of them derives some support from such a story as the following.

"Rabbi Abin, in going out from an audience of the king, turned his back on him. The courtiers wanted to kill him; but on observing *that two bands of fire conducted him*, they let him go out, according to the verse, 'And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee' (Deut. xxviii. 10). Rabbi Simon Ben Jochai applied this verse even to the spirits of the demons."[1] These two bands are the lateral thongs of the phylacteries.

(3) After what we have seen of the process of accretion in the simple matters of fringes and frontlets, by which, under the manipulation of the stu-

to demonstrate, to their own satisfaction, what these must be. (Schwab. Bab. Berachôth, p. 241.)

[1] Jer. Berachôth, v. i. (Schwab. p. 98.)

dents of the Oral Law, they became so recondite and so important, we are hardly surprised to learn that, in our Lord's time, the Pharisees, like the modern Ashkenazîm, "made broad their phylacteries and enlarged the borders of their garments;" or that different Rabbis asserted that "he who has *Tephillîn* on his head and arm, and *Tsitsîth* on his garment, and a *Mezuzah* on his door, has every possible guarantee that he will not sin;"[1] or that it was, on the one hand, venial to say that phylacteries were not enjoined at all, because that would merely be an assertion against the Law, of which some of the words were "light" as well as some "heavy;"[2] but to say that the *beth* should have *five totaphôth* or compartments instead of *four*, was a capital offence, because it was against the word of the Scribes, of which *all* were heavy."[3]

(4) As the subject of the scriptural exegesis of Rabbinism is too wide to be handled in the remainder of this paper, it must be reserved for the next, and I will now only ask, What was the basis on which the Jews founded their immense devotion to the heavy fictions, and embarrassing minutiæ, and conscience-deadening burdens of their Oral Law?

(*a*) The answer seems to be that when, after the exile, a new and powerful impulse had been given, by the genius of Ezra and the enthusiasm of Nehemiah, to the study of the Law, it was inevitable that,

[1] Menach. 33, 6 (Kalisch, Exod. p. 224).

[2] Mishna, "Sanhedrin," xi. 3. In the accompanying Jer. Gemara, the authority of Rabbi Ishmael is quoted to this effect, and Cant. i. 2 quoted to prove it.

[3] See Gfrörer, Jahrhund. d. Heils. i. 146; Jer. Berachôth, f. 3*b* (Schwab. p. 17).

in the minds of a people who had never realized the truth that the letter is nothing and the spirit everything, an infinitude of small questions of casuistry should have arisen. External scrupulosity, ceremonial correctness, elaborate ritualism, are things far more easy at all times than manly, free, and spiritual allegiance; and the Jews were least likely of any nation to be exempt from that craving for the decisions of infallible authority which has always arisen among those who have failed to realize that what God desires is, not the service of the lips or the accuracy of the outward obedience, but the devotion of the heart and of the life. Doubtless, some of the questions which would arise could be settled by an appeal to precedent, which would tax the memory of the oldest exiles; and then the notion that these precedents were founded on others still more ancient would soon be merged in a growing fancy that they were as old as the Law itself.[1] The formulation of this fancy into a rigid belief would not be long delayed, and accordingly we find generations of later Jews adopting without hesitation the belief that the Oral Law—at any rate, all those parts of it which were called *Perushîm* and *Dinerîm*—were delivered by Moses to Aaron, by him to Eliezer, by him to Joshua, by Joshua to the Zekanîm, or elders,[2] by these to the Judges, by these to the Prophets, by these to Ezra and the Sopherîm of the famous Keneseth

[1] Among the elements of the Mishna we find—"*Gezerôth*, extemporaneous decisions demanded by emergencies; *Tekanôth*, modification of usages to meet existing circumstances; and *Elalîm*, universal principles under which a multitude of particular cases may be provided for" (Etheridge's Heb. Lex. p. 119).

[2] See Maimonides' Preface to the Mishnaic order *Zeraîm*, or "Seeds."

Haggedola, or Great Synagogue, and by these to the *Tanaîm*, or "authoritative teachers," who handed it down to the *Amoraîm*, or "discoursers," and so on through the remaining schools of Jewish Rabbis.

(*b*) Very strange are the "scriptural proofs," or collateral illustrations — if even this less authoritative expression may be applied to utterly arbitrary and fantastic inferences drawn from sacred texts by utterly impossible principles of interpretation— which the Rabbis sometimes condescended to adduce in favour of such assertions. Thus, Rabbi Levi Bar-Hama said, "Why is it written, in Exod. xxiv. 12, 'Come, . . . and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them'? The '*tables*' contain the Ten Commandments; the '*written law*' is the Pentateuch; and the '*commandments*' are contained in the Mishna. The words '*which I have written*' correspond to the Prophets and the Hagiographa;[1] and the words '*that thou mayest teach them*' to the Gemara. *This proves that the Oral Laws*—the Mishna and the Gemara—were given to Moses on Sinai."[2] Similarly it was a favourite belief of the Jewish doctors that, in Deut. iv. 14, the word "*statutes*" referred to the Written, and the word "*judgments*" to the Oral Law. Yet another proof was derived from Exod. xxxiv. 27: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for *after the tenor* (עַל־פִּי, *al pî*, 'according to the *mouth*') of

[1] The difficulty of "which I have *written*" in a text thus perverted to *prove* the existence of an *oral* law, was thus set aside by a purely arbitrary and absurd limitation. Rashi gets over it by the remark (on Exod. xxiv. 12) that "all the six hundred and thirteen commandments are comprehended in the ten."

[2] Bab. Berachôth, f. 5*a* (Schwab. p. 234).

these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel;" where great stress is laid on the use of the word "mouth," to shew that the Mosaic legislation had one great division of it a *Torah shebeal Pî*, or "oral," as well as a *Torah shebeheteb*, or "written" Law.[1]

The last extravagance of which the Jews were guilty was to put this mass of loose heterogeneous tradition, not only on a level with the ceremonial law, but even with the Ten Commandments; and finally to exalt the Mishna above the Pentateuch, and even the heavy pedantries of the Gemara above the Mishna. Every one has heard the Rabbinic remark that whereas the Law is like salt, the Mishna is like pepper, and the Gemara like spice: the Law like water, the Mishna like wine, the Gemara like spiced and aromatic wine:[2] that the Law is the body, but that the Mishna is the soul, and the Gemara the very *mens animi*, the very soul of the soul. I have already shewn that disobedience to the Oral Law was regarded as far more heinous than defiance of the written precept. It may be worth while to adduce further illustrations of an opinion which so strongly proves the necessity for our Lord's condemnation of the "tradition of the fathers," because it made of none effect the Word of God (Mark vii. 13). The following anecdotes, from the Mishna and Jerusalem Gemara of the treatise Berachôth (§ i. 7),

[1] See Weil, *Le Judaisme*, i. 101.

[2] See Babha Metzia, 33*a*. "The study of the Bible is a matter of indifference; of the Mishna a virtue; of the Gemara the highest virtue." In Bab. Chagiga, x*a*, the verse, Zach. viii. 10, "Neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in," is explained to mean that "when a man leaves the Halacha (*i.e.*, the Talmud) for the Bible he has no more peace." Gfrörer Jahr. d. Heils. i. 151; Eisenmenger Entd. Judent. i 330.

will amply serve this purpose. "I was once travelling," says Rabbi Tarphon, "and having bent to read (the Shemâ), according to the advice of Shammai, I ran the risk of being captured by brigands, because I did not catch sight of them. 'You deserved to be punished,' was the reply, 'for not having followed the opinion of Hillel.'" On this the Gemara remarks that, according to Rabbi Simon Bar-Vawé, in the name of Rabbi Johanan, the words of the Rabbis are preferable to those of the Law (Cant. viii. 10). And here is the proof of it. Rabbi Abba Bar-Cohen, in the name of Rabbi Juda Bar-Pari, observes that if Rabbi Tarphon had not read the Shemâ at all, he would only have broken an affirmative precept, and so have deserved a slight punishment; but in reading it contrary to the rule of Hillel he was guilty of a capital crime, in virtue of the principle that, "*Whoso breaketh a hedge*" [in this instance the famous *Seyag la-thorah*, or Hedge round the Law], "*a serpent shall bite him*" (Eccles. x. 8). Then follows the passage already quoted, about the four compartments of the phylactery, and then the following remarkable observations. "Rabbi Hananîa, the son of Rabbi Ada, in the name of Rabbi Tanchoom Bar-Rabbi Hiya, says, 'The words of the wise are weightier than those of the prophets. It is written (Micah ii. 6, 11), "They say, Prophesy not. *They* [*i.e.*, the wise, the Rabbis] shall prophesy." Whom do the prophet and the sage resemble? They resemble two couriers sent by a king to a province. As to one of them, he orders that, unless he shews his signet and his turban, they are not to listen to him; as to the other, that they are to believe him without these credentials. Thus

for the prophet it is said, "He shall give you a sign or a miracle" (Deut. xiii. 2); while here it is said (Deut. xvii. 11), "According to the law which they [the sages] shall teach you."'"

In the bolder Talmudic utterances God Himself is represented as studying the Talmud, and we are therefore less astonished to learn that many modern Jews in the East, if they profess to any learning whatever, study nothing else. Such knowledge is most assuredly but little more valuable than the arrogance, at once gross and ignorant, which, according to the testimony of many of their own co-religionists, characterizes the living Rabbis of Jewish communities scattered throughout the East.

5. I will conclude this paper with two Hagadôth, to shew the astonishing and imperturbable self-confidence of the Rabbis in all their system of narrow, shallow, and useless pedantry, which they took for learning and inspiration. One is from the Babha Metzia (86 *a*).

Once, in the Heavenly Academy—for in heaven, too, there are Rabbinic Schools, as on earth—there rose a learned discussion on the right of the leper. God—the High Rabbi of Heaven—explained a particular case as clean. The entire heavenly Academy—the angels—all disagreed with Him. Then they said, "Who shall decide between us?" They agreed to refer the matter to the decision of Rabbi Bar-Nachman, who stood unrivalled in his reputation for his critical judgment in all cases of casuistry affecting lepers. The Death-Angel was accordingly sent to him, caused his death, and brought his soul into the heavenly assembly. The question was propounded to him, and he, to the no small delight of the

Supreme, decided in his favour. Accordingly Rabbi Bar-Nachman was glorified by many "Daughters of a Voice,"—*i. e.*, sounds from heaven,—and miracles were wrought at his grave.[1] Under such circumstances, Rabbi Solomon Jarchi may well say, in his commentary on Deut. xvii. 11, that even if the Rabbis teach that the right hand is the left, and the left the right, they must be believed.[2]

The second story, which becomes positively sublime in the intensity of its arrogance and the impregnability of its self-satisfaction, is also from the Babha Metzia (f. 59*b*).

Once in a Beth Dîn a grave question of doctrine had been discussed, and Rabbi Eliezer was at variance with the opinion of his colleagues: it referred to the law about things clean and unclean. Argument after argument was adduced by Rabbi Eliezer, and refuted. "If right is on my side," he at last exclaimed, in indignation, "let this caroub-tree furnish my proof." Instantly the tree plucked itself up by the roots, and transported itself a hundred ells. "What matters this portent?" exclaimed the Rabbis, "and what does this caroub-tree prove in the question between us?" "Well then," replied Rabbi Eliezer, "let this brook that rolls near us demonstrate the truth of my view." Instantly, marvellous to relate, the waters of the brook began to flow back to their source. "What matters it," again exclaimed the Doctors, "whether the waters of this

[1] Edzard Abhoda Zara, ii. p. 365. The anecdote, as I have said elsewhere, will remind the reader of Pope's not wholly unjustifiable remark about Milton's discussion in the "Paradise Lost:"

> "In quibbles angel and archangel join,
> And God the Father turns a school divine."

[2] Gfrörer, *ubi super*, p. 149.

brook flow uphill or downhill? It furnishes no proof in our discussion." "Then let the walls of this chamber," said Rabbi Eliezer, "be my witnesses and proofs." At once the columns bent themselves, and threatened ruin on all below. This was going rather too far for the limits of fair discussion, so up rose Rabbi Joshua, and cried, "Walls, when the wise are discussing the interpretation of the Law, what concern is that of yours?" Whereon the walls stayed themselves in their fall; but as they had stopped short out of respect for Rabbi Joshua, they still remained bent, and so remain to this day, in honour of Rabbi Eliezer. "Let the Bath Kôl, the voice of God, decide between us," said Rabbi Eliezer; and instantly far up in heaven was heard a supernatural voice, exclaiming, "Cease to contradict Rabbi Eliezer! He has right on his side." But Rabbi Joshua, quite equal to the occasion, rose, and protesting against the mysterious voice, cried aloud, "No! reason is no longer hidden in heaven; she has been granted to the earth, and it is to human reason that it pertains to understand and to interpret. It is not mysterious voices, but the majority of the sages, which ought alone to decide questions of doctrine." And, so far from resenting this bold assertion of absolute independence, there falls from heaven another voice entirely approving of it, and exclaiming, "My sons have conquered!"

Having thus traced the growth of the Oral Law, from some of its simplest germs to its most colossal growth of pride and self-assertion, I hope in my next paper to give some specimens of the concomitant and resultant methods of scriptural exegesis.

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