

Traditionalism

Traditionalism, Its Origin, Character, And Literature

The Mishnah And Talmud

from Alfred Edersheim, “Life of Jesus the Messiah”

In trying to picture to ourselves New Testament scenes, the figure most prominent, next to those of the chief actors, is that of the Scribe (*literatus*). He seems ubiquitous; we meet him in Jerusalem, in Judea, and even in Galilee. Indeed, he is indispensable, not only in Babylon, which may have been the birthplace of his order, but among the ‘dispersion’ also. Everywhere he appears as the mouthpiece and representative of the people; he pushes to the front, the crowd respectfully giving way, and eagerly hanging on his utterances, as those of a recognized authority. He has been solemnly ordained by the laying on of hands; and is the Rabbi. The title *Rabbon* (our Master) occurs first in connection with Gamaliel i. (*Acts* v. 34).

The NT expression *Rabboni* or *Rabbouni* (*St. Mark* x. 51; *St. John* xx. 16) takes the word *Rabbon* or *Rabban* (here in the absolute sense)= *Rabh*, and adds to it the personal suffix ‘my,’ pronouncing the *Kamez* in the Syriac manner.] ‘my great one,’ Master, *amplitudo*. He puts questions; he urges objections; he expects full explanations and respectful demeanor. Indeed, his hyper-ingenuity in questioning has become a proverb. There is not measure of his dignity, nor yet limit to his importance. He is the ‘lawyer,’ [c the *legis Divinae* peritus, *St. Matt.* xxii. 35; *St. Luke* vii. 30; x.25; xi. 45; xiv. 3.] the well-plastered pit,’ filled with the water of knowledge’ out of which not a drop can escape,’ in opposition to the weeds of untilled soil’ of ignorance He is the Divine aristocrat, among the vulgar herd of rude and profane ‘country-people,’ who ‘know not the Law’ and are ‘cursed.’

More than that, his order constitutes the ultimate authority on all questions of faith and practice; he is ‘the Exegete of the Laws,’ the ‘teacher of the Law,’ [*St. Luke* v. 17; *Acts* v. 34; comp. also *1 Tim.* i. 7.] and along with ‘the chief priests’ and ‘elders’

a judge in the ecclesiastical tribunals, whether of the capital or in the provinces. [*St. Matt.* ii. 4; xx. 18; xxi. 15; xxvi. 57; xxvii. 41; *St. Mark* xiv.1.43;xv. 1; *St. Luke* xxii. 2, 66; xxiii. 10; *Acts* iv. 5.] Although generally appearing in company with ‘the Pharisees,’ he is not necessarily one of them, for they represent a religious party, while he has a status, and holds an office. [The distinction between ‘Pharisees’ and ‘Scribes,’ is marked in many passages in the NT, for example, *St. Matt.* xxiii. *passim*; *St. Luke* vii. 30; xiv. 3; and especially in *St. Luke* xi. 43, comp. with v. 46. The words ‘Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,’ in ver. 44, are, according to all evidence, spurious.]

In short, he is the Talmid or learned student, the Chakham or sage, whose honor is to be great in the future world. Each Scribe outweighed all the common people, who must accordingly pay him every honor. Nay, they were honored of God Himself, and their praises proclaimed by the angels; and in heaven also, each of them would hold the same rank and distinction as on earth. Such was to be the respect paid to their sayings, that they were to be absolutely believed, even if they were to declare that to be at the right hand which was at the left, or vice versa.

An institution which had attained such proportions, and wielded such power, could not have been of recent growth. In point of fact, its rise was very gradual, and stretched back to the time of Nehemiah, if not beyond it. Although from the utter confusion of historical notices in Rabbinic writings and their constant practice of antedating events, it is impossible to furnish satisfactory details, the general development of the institution can be traced with sufficient precision.

If Ezra is described in Holy Writ [c *Ezra* vii.6, 10, 11, 12.] as ‘a ready (expertus) Scribe,’ who had ‘set his heart to seek (seek out the full meaning of) the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel,’ this might indicate to his successors, the Sopherim (Scribes), the threefold direction which their studies afterwards took: the Midrash, the Halakhah,

and the Haggadah.

Of course, in another sense the Midrash might be considered as the source of both the Halakhah and the Haggadah, of which the one pointed to Scriptural investigation, the other to what was to be observed, and the third to oral teaching in the widest sense. But Ezra left his work uncompleted. On Nehemiah's second arrival in Palestine, he found matters again in a state of utmost confusion. [Neh. xiii.] He must have felt the need of establishing some permanent authority to watch over religious affairs. This we take to have been 'the Great Assembly,' or, as it is commonly called, the 'Great Synagogue.' It is impossible with certainty to determine, either who composed this assembly, or of how many members it consisted. The Talmudic notices are often inconsistent. The number as given in them amounts to about 120. But the modern doubts against the institution itself cannot be sustained.

Probably it comprised the leading men in Church and State, the chief priests, elders, and 'judges', the latter two classes including 'the Scribes,' if, indeed, that order was already separately organized. [Ezra x. 14; Neh. v. 7.] Probably also the term 'Great Assembly' refers rather to a succession of men than to one Synod; the ingenuity of later times filling such parts of the historical canvas as had been left blank with fictitious notices. In the nature of things such an assembly could not exercise permanent sway in a sparsely populated country, without a strong central authority.

Nor could they have wielded real power during the political difficulties and troubles of foreign domination. The oldest tradition sums up the result of their activity in this sentence ascribed to them: 'Be careful in judgment, set up many Talmudim, and make a hedge about the Torah (Law).'

In the course of time this rope of sand dissolved. The High-Priest, Simon the Just, [In the beginning of the third century BC] is already designated as 'of the remnants of the Great Assembly.' But even this expression does not necessarily imply that he actually belonged to it. In the troublous times which followed his Pontificate, the sacred study seems to have been left to solitary individuals.

The Mishnic tractate Aboth, which records 'the sayings of the Fathers,' here gives us only the name of Antigonus of Socho. It is significant, that for the first time we now meet a Greek name among Rabbinic authorities, together with an indistinct allusion to his disciples.

The long interval between Simon the Just and Antigonus and his disciples, brings us to the terrible time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the great Syrian persecution. The very sayings attributed to these two sound like an echo of the political state of the country. On three things, Simon was wont to say, the permanency of the (Jewish?) world depends: on the Torah (faithfulness to the Law and its pursuit), on worship (the non-participation in Grecianism), and on works of righteousness. They were dark times, when God's persecuted people were tempted to think, that it might be vain to serve Him, in which Antigonus had it: 'Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of reward, but be like servants who serve their lord without a view to the getting of reward, and let the fear of heaven be upon you.'

After these two names come those of the so-called five Zugoth, or 'couples,' of whom Hillel and Shammai are the last. Later tradition has represented these successive couples as, respectively, the Nasi (president), and Ab-beth-din (vice-president, of the Sanhedrin). Of the first three of these 'couples' it may be said that, except significant allusions to the circumstances and dangers of their times, their recorded utterances clearly point to the development of purely Sopheric teaching, that is, to the Rabbinistic part of their functions.

From the fourth 'couple,' which consists of Simon ben Shetach, who figured so largely in the political history of the later Maccabees (as Ab-beth-din), and his superior in learning and judgment, Jehudah ben Tabbai (as Nasi), we have again utterances which show, in harmony with the political history of the time, that judicial functions had been once more restored to the Rabbis. The last of five couples brings us to the time of Herod and of Christ.

We have seen that, during the period of severe domestic troubles, beginning with the persecutions under the Seleucidae, which marked the mortal struggle between Judaism and Grecianism, the 'Great Assembly' had disappeared from the scene. The Sopherim had ceased to be a party in power. They had become the Zeqenim, 'Elders,' whose task was purely ecclesiastical, the preservation of their religion, such as the dogmatic labors of their predecessors had made it. Yet another period opened with the advent of the Maccabees. These had been raised into power by the enthusiasm of the Chasidim, or 'pious ones,' who formed the nationalist party in the land, and who had gathered around the liberators of their faith and country.

But the later bearing of the Maccabees had alienated the nationalists. Henceforth they sink out of view, or, rather, the extreme section of them merged in the extreme section of the Pharisees, till fresh national calamities awakened a new nationalist party. Instead of the Chasidim, we see now two religious parties within the Synagogue, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The latter originally represented a reaction from the Pharisees, the modern men, who sympathized with the later tendencies of the Maccabees. Josephus places the origin of these two schools in the time of Jonathan, the successor of Judas Maccabee, [160-143 BC] and with this other Jewish notices agree. Jonathan accepted from the foreigner (the Syrian) the High-Priestly dignity, and combined with it that of secular ruler. But this is not all.

The earlier Maccabees surrounded themselves with a governing eldership. On the coins of their reigns this is designated as the *Chebher*, or eldership (association) of the Jews. Thus, theirs was what Josephus designates as an aristocratic government, and of which he somewhat vaguely says, that it lasted 'from the Captivity until the descendants of the Asmoneans set up kingly government.' In this aristocratic government the High-Priest would rather be the chief of a representative ecclesiastical body of rulers.

This state of things continued until the great breach between Hyrcanus, the fourth from Judas Maccabee, and the Pharisaical party, which is equally recorded by Josephus and the Talmud, with only variations of names and details. The dispute apparently arose from the desire of the Pharisees, that Hyrcanus should be content with the secular power, and resign the Pontificate. But it ended in the persecution, and removal from power, of the Pharisees.

Very significantly, Jewish tradition introduces again at this time those purely ecclesiastical authorities which are designated as 'the couples.' In accordance with this, altered state of things, the name 'Chebher' now disappears from the coins of the Maccabees, and Rabbinical celebrities ('the couples' or *Zugoth*) are only teachers of traditionalism, and ecclesiastical authorities. The 'eldership,' which under the earlier Maccabees was called 'the tribunal of the Asmoneans.'

Thus we place the origin of this institution about the time of Hyrcanus. With this Jewish tradition fully agrees. The power of the Sanhedrin would, of course, vary with political circumstances, being at

times almost absolute, as in the reign of the Pharisaic devotee-Queen, Alexandra, while at others it was shorn of all but ecclesiastical authority. But as the Sanhedrin was in full force at the time of Jesus, its organization will claim our attention in the sequel.

After this brief outline of the origin and development of an institution which exerted such decisive influence on the future of Israel, it seems necessary similarly to trace the growth of the 'traditions of the Elders,' so as to understand what, alas! so effectually, opposed the new doctrine of the Kingdom. The first place must here be assigned to those legal determinations, which traditionalism declared absolutely binding on all, not only of equal, but even greater obligation than Scripture itself.

Thus we read: 'The sayings of the elders have more weight than those of the prophets' (Jer. Ber. i. 7); 'an offence against the sayings of the Scribes is worse than one against those of Scripture' (Sanh. xi. 3). Compare also Er. 21 b The comparison between such claims and those sometimes set up on behalf of 'creeds' and 'articles' does not seem to me applicable. In the introduction to the *Midr. on Lament.* it is inferred from Jer. ix. 12, 13, that to forsake the law, in the Rabbinic sense, was worse than idolatry, uncleanness, or the shedding of blood. See generally that Introduction.]

And this not illogically, since tradition was equally of Divine origin with Holy Scripture, and authoritatively explained its meaning; supplemented it; gave it application to cases not expressly provided for, perhaps not even foreseen in Biblical times; and generally guarded its sanctity by extending and adding to its provisions, drawing 'a hedge,' around its 'garden enclosed.'

Thus, in new and dangerous circumstances, would the full meaning of God's Law, to its every title and iota, be elicited and obeyed. Thus also would their feet be arrested, who might stray from within, or break in from without. Accordingly, so important was tradition, that the greatest merit a Rabbi could claim was the strictest adherence to the traditions, which he had received from his teacher.

Nor might one Sanhedrin annul, or set aside, the decrees of its predecessors. To such length did they go in this worship of the letter, that the great Hillel was actually wont to mispronounce a word, because his teacher before him had done so.

These traditional ordinances, as already stated, bear the general name of the *Halakhah*, as indicat-

ing alike the way in which the fathers had walked, and that which their children were bound to follow. These Halakhoth were either simply the laws laid down in Scripture; or else derived from, or traced to it by some ingenious and artificial method of exegesis; or added to it, by way of amplification and for safety's sake; or, finally, legalized customs. They provided for every possible and impossible case, entered into every detail of private, family, and public life; and with iron logic, unbending rigor, and most minute analysis pursued and dominated man, turn whither he might, laying on him a yoke which was truly unbearable.

The return which it offered was the pleasure and distinction of knowledge, the acquisition of righteousness, and the final attainment of rewards; one of its chief advantages over our modern traditionalism, that it was expressly forbidden to draw inferences from these traditions, which should have the force of fresh legal determinations.

In describing the historical growth of the Halakhah, Perhaps I may also take leave to refer to the corresponding chapters in my 'History of the Jewish Nation.' Similarly, the expressions in Ex. xxiv. 12 were thus explained: 'the tables of stone,' the ten commandments; the 'law,' the written Law; the 'commandments,' the Mishnah; 'which I have written,' the Prophets and Hagiographa; 'that thou mayest teach them,' the Talmud, which shows that they were all given to Moses on Sinai' (Ber. 5 a, lines 11-16).

A like application was made of the various clauses in Cant. vii. 12 (Erub. 21 b). Nay, by an alternation of the words in Hos. vii. 10, it was shown that the banished had been brought back for the merit of their study (of the sacrificial sections) of the Mishnah (Vayyik R. 7).] we may dismiss in a few sentences the legends of Jewish tradition about patriarchal times.

They assure us, that there was an Academy and a Rabbinic tribunal of Shem, and they speak of traditions delivered by that Patriarch to Jacob; of diligent attendance by the latter on the Rabbinic College; of a tractate (in 400 sections) on idolatry by Abraham, and of his observance of the whole traditional law; of the introduction of the three daily times of prayer, successively by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of the three benedictions in the customary 'grace at meat,' as propounded by Moses, Joshua, and David and Solomon; of the Mosaic introduction of the practice of reading lessons from the law on Sabbaths, New Moons, and Feast Days,

and even on the Mondays and Thursdays; and of that, by the same authority, of preaching on the three great festivals about those feasts.

Further, they ascribe to Moses the arrangement of the priesthood into eight courses (that into sixteen to Samuel, and that into twenty-four to David), as also, the duration of the time for marriage festivities, and for mourning. But evidently these are vague statements, with the object of tracing traditionalism and its observances to primeval times, even as legend had it, that Adam was born circumcised, and later writers that he had kept all the ordinances.

But other principles apply to the traditions, from Moses downwards. According to the Jewish view, God had given Moses on Mount Sinai alike the oral and the written Law, that is, the Law with all its interpretations and applications. From Ex. xx. 1, it was inferred, that God had communicated to Moses the Bible, the Mishnah, and Talmud, and the Haggadah, even to that which scholars would in latest times propound.

In answer to the somewhat natural objection, why the Bible alone had been written, it was said that Moses had proposed to write down all the teaching entrusted to him, but the Almighty had refused, on account of the future subjection of Israel to the nations, who would take from them the written Law. Then the unwritten traditions would remain to separate between Israel and the Gentiles. Popular exegesis found this indicated even in the language of prophecy.

But traditionalism went further, and placed the oral actually above the written Law. The expression, [Ex. xxxiv. 27.] 'After the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel,' was explained as meaning, that God's covenant was founded on the spoken, in opposition to the written words.

If the written was thus placed below the oral Law, we can scarcely wonder that the reading of the Hagiographa was actually prohibited to the people on the Sabbath, from fear that it might divert attention from the learned discourses of the Rabbis. The study of them on that day was only allowed for the purpose of learned investigation and discussions.

But if traditionalism was not to be committed to writing by Moses, measures had been taken to prevent oblivion or inaccuracy. Moses had always repeated a traditional law successively to Aaron, to his sons, and to the elders of the people, and

they again in turn to each other, in such wise, that Aaron heard the Mishnah four times, his sons three times, the Elders twice, and the people once.

But even this was not all, for by successive repetitions of Aaron, his sons, and the Elders) the people also heard it four times. And, before his death, Moses had summoned any one to come forward, if he had forgotten ought of what he had heard and learned. [Deut. i. 5.] But these 'Halakhoth of Moses from Sinai' do not make up the whole of traditionalism. According to Maimonides, it consists of five, but more critically of three classes.

The first of these comprises both such ordinances as are found in the Bible itself, and the so-called Halakhoth of Moses from Sinai, that is, such laws and usages as prevailed from time immemorial, and which, according to the Jewish view, had been orally delivered to, but not written down by Moses. For these, therefore, no proof was to be sought in Scripture, at most support, or confirmatory allusion (Asmakhtu).

At the same time the ordinances, for which an appeal could be made to Asmakhta, were better liked than those which rested on tradition alone (Jer. Chag. p. 76, col d.) Nor were these open to discussion. The second class formed the 'oral law,' or the 'traditional teaching' in the stricter sense. To this class belonged all that was supposed to be implied in, or that could be deduced from, the Law of Moses.

In connection with this it is very significant that R. Jochanan ben Zaccai, who taught not many years after the Crucifixion of Christ, was wont to say, that, in the future, Halakhahs in regard to purity, which had not the support of Scripture, would be repeated. In general, the teaching of R. Jochanan should be studied to understand the unacknowledged influence which Christianity exercised upon the Synagogue.

For this class of ordinances reference to, and proof from, Scripture was required. Not so for the third class of ordinances, which were 'the hedge' drawn by the Rabbis around the Law, to prevent any breach of the Law or customs, to ensure their exact observance, or to meet peculiar circumstances and dangers. These ordinances constituted 'the sayings of the Scribes' or 'of the Rabbis', and were either positive in their character (Teqqanoth), or else negative (Gezeroth from gazar to cut off').

Perhaps the distinction of these two cannot always be strictly carried out. But it was probably to

this third class especially, confessedly unsupported by Scripture, that these words of Christ referred: [St. Matt. xxiii. 3, 4.] 'All therefore whatsoever they tell you, that do and observe; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with their finger they will not move them away (set in motion).'

In further confirmation of our view the following may be quoted: 'A Gezerah (i.e. this third class of ordinances) is not to be laid on the congregation, unless the majority of the congregation is able to bear it', words which read like a commentary on those of Jesus, and show that these burdens could be laid on, or moved away, according to the varying judgment or severity of a Rabbinic College.

This body of traditional ordinances forms the subject of the Mishnah, or second, repeated law. We have here to place on one side the Law of Moses as recorded in the Pentateuch, as standing by itself. All else, even the teaching of the Prophets and of the Hagiographa, as well as the oral traditions, bore the general name of Qabbalah, 'that which has been received.'

The sacred study, or Midrash, in the original application of the term, concerned either the Halakhah, traditional ordinance, which was always 'that which was said' upon the authority of individuals, not as legal ordinance. It was illustration, commentary, anecdote, clever or learned saying, &c. At first the Halakhah remained unwritten, probably owing to the disputes between Pharisees and Sadducees. But the necessity of fixedness and order led in course of time to more or less complete collections of the Halakhoth.

The oldest of these is ascribed to R. Akiba, in the time of the Emperor Hadrian. But the authoritative collection in the so-called Mishnah is the work of Jehudah the Holy, who died about the end of the second century of our era.

Altogether, the Mishnah comprises six 'Orders' (Sedarim), each devoted to a special class of subjects.

The first 'Order' (Zeraim, 'seeds') begins with the ordinances concerning 'benedictions,' or the time, mode, manner, and character of the prayers prescribed. It then goes on to detail what may be called the religio-agrarian laws (such as tithing, Sabbatical years, first fruits, &c.).

The second 'Order' (Moed, 'festive time') discusses all connected with the Sabbath observance and the

other festivals.

The third 'Order' (Nashim, 'women') treats of all that concerns betrothal, marriage and divorce, but also includes a tractate on the Nasirate.

The fourth 'Order' (Neziqin, 'damages') contains the civil and criminal law. Characteristically, it includes all the ordinances concerning idol-worship (in the tractate Abhodah Zarah) and 'the sayings of the Fathers' (Abhoth).

The fifth 'Order' (Qodashim, 'holy things') treats of the various classes of sacrifices, offerings, and things belonging (as the first-born), or dedicated, to God, and of all questions which can be grouped under 'sacred things' (such as the redemption, exchange, or alienation of what had been dedicated to God). It also includes the laws concerning the daily morning and evening service (Tamid), and a description of the structure and arrangements of the Temple (Middoth, 'the measurements').

Finally, the sixth 'Order' (Toharoth, 'cleannesses') gives every ordinance connected with the questions of 'clean and unclean,' alike as regards human beings, animals, and inanimate things.]

These 'Orders' are divided into tractates (Masikhtoth, Massekhtiyoth, 'textures, webs'), of which there are sixty-three (or else sixty-two) in all.

The tractates are again subdivided into chapters (Peraqim), in all 525, which severally consist of a certain number of verses, or Mishnahs (Mishnayoth, in all 4,187).

Considering the variety and complexity of the subjects treated, the Mishnah is arranged with remarkable logical perspicuity. The language is Hebrew, though of course not that of the Old Testament. The words rendered necessary by the new circumstances are chiefly derived from the Greek, the Syriac, and the Latin, with Hebrew terminations. But all connected with social intercourse, or ordinary life (such as contracts), is written, not in Hebrew, but in Aramaean, as the language of the people.

But the traditional law embodied other materials than the Halakoth collected in the Mishnah. Some that had not been recorded there, found a place in the works of certain Rabbis, or were derived from their schools. These are called Boraitas, that is, traditions external to the Mishnah.

Finally, there were 'additions' (or Tosephtoth), dating after the completion of the Mishnah, but probably not later than the third century of our era.

Such there are to not fewer than fifty-two out of the sixty-three Mishnic tractates.

When speaking of the Halakhah as distinguished from the Haggadah, we must not, however, suppose that the latter could be entirely separated from it. In point of fact, one whole tractate in the Mishnah (Aboth: The Sayings of the 'Fathers') is entirely Haggadah; a second (Middoth: the 'Measurements of the Temple') has Halakhah in only fourteen places; while in the rest of the tractates Haggadah occurs in not fewer than 207 places. Only thirteen out of the sixty-three tractates of the Mishnah are entirely free from Haggadah.

Hitherto we have only spoken of the Mishnah. But this comprises only a very small part of traditionalism. In course of time the discussions, illustrations, explanations, and additions to which the Mishnah gave rise, whether in its application, or in the Academies of the Rabbis, were authoritatively collected and edited in what are known as the two Talmuds or Gemaras. [*Talmud*: that which is learned, doctrine. *Gemara*: either the same, or else 'perfection,' 'completion.']

If we imagine something combining law reports, a Rabbinical 'Hansard,' and notes of a theological debating club, all thoroughly Oriental, full of digressions, anecdotes, quaint sayings, fancies, legends, and too often of what, from its profanity, superstition, and even obscenity, could scarcely be quoted, we may form some general idea of what the Talmud is.

The oldest of these two Talmuds dates from about the close of the fourth century of our era. It is the product of the Palestinian Academies, and hence called the Jerusalem Talmud. The second is about a century younger, and the outcome of the Babylonian schools, hence called the Babylon (afterwards also 'our') Talmud. We do not possess either of these works complete.

The following will explain our meaning: On the first 'order' we have the Jerusalem Talmud complete, that is, on every tractate (comprising in all 65 folio leaves), while the Babylon Talmud extends only over its first tractate (Berakhoth).

On the second order, the four last chapters of one tractate (Shabbath) are wanting in the Jerusalem, and one whole tractate (Sheqalim) in the Babylon Talmud.

The third order is complete in both Gemaras.

On the fourth order a chapter is wanting in one tractate (Makkoth) in the Jerusalem, and two whole

tractates (Eduyoth and Abhoth) in both Gemaras.

The fifth order is wholly wanting in the Jerusalem, and two and a half tractates of it Babylon Talmud.

Of the sixth order only one tractate (Niddah) exists in both Gemaras.

The principal Halakhoth were collected in a work (dating from about 800 AD) entitled Halakhoth Gedoloth. They are arranged to correspond with the weekly lectionary of the Pentateuch in a work entitled Sheeltoth ('Questions:' bested. Dghernfurth, 1786). The Jerusalem Talmud extends over 39, the Babylonian over 36 1/2 tractates, 15 1/2 tractates have no Gemara at all.]

The most defective is the Jerusalem Talmud, which is also much briefer, and contains far fewer discussions than that of Babylon. The Babylon Talmud, which in its present form extends over thirty-six out of the sixty-three tractates of the Mishnah, is about ten or eleven times the size of the latter, and more than four times that of the Jerusalem Talmud. It occupies (in our editions), with marginal commentary, 2,947 folio leaves (pages a and b).

Both Talmuds are written in Aramaean; the one in its western, the other in its eastern dialect, and in both the Mishnah is discussed seriatim, and clause by clause. Of the character of these discussions it would be impossible to convey an adequate idea. When we bear in mind the many sparkling, beautiful, and occasionally almost sublime passages in the Talmud, but especially that its forms of thought and expression so often recall those of the New Testament, only prejudice and hatred could indulge in indiscriminate vituperation. On the other hand, it seems unaccountable how any one who has read a Talmudic tractate, or even part of one, could compare the Talmud with the New Testament, or find in the one the origin of the other.

To complete our brief survey, it should be added that our editions of the Babylon Talmud contain (at the close of vol. ix. and after the fourth 'Order') certain Boraitas. Of these there were originally nine, but two of the smaller tractates (on 'the memorial fringes,' and on 'non-Israelites') have not been preserved.

The first of these Boraitas is entitled Abhoth de Rabbi Nathan, and partially corresponds with a tractate of a similar name in the Mishnah. [The last ten chapters curiously group together events or things under numerals from 10 downwards. The most generally interesting of these is that of the 10 Nequdoth, or passages of Scripture in which letters

are marked by dots, together with the explanation of their reasons (ch. xxxiv.). The whole Boraita seems composed of parts of three different works, and consists of forty (or forty-one) chapters, and occupies ten folio leaves.] Next follow six minor tractates.

These are respectively entitled *Sopherim* (Scribes), [1 In twenty-one chapters, each containing a number of Halakhahs] detailing the ordinances about copying the Scriptures, the ritual of the Lectionary, and festive prayers; *Ebhel Rabbathi* or Semakhoth, containing Halakhah and Haggadah about funeral and mourning observances; *Kallah*, on the married relationship; *Derekh Erets*, embodying moral directions and the rules and customs of social intercourse; *Derekh Erets Zuta*, treating of similar subjects, but as regards learned students; and, lastly, the *Pereq ha Shalom*, which is a eulogy on peace.

All these tractates date, at least in their present form, later than the Talmudic period. [Besides these, Raphael Kirchheim has published (Frankfort, 1851) the so-called seven smaller tractates, covering altogether, with abundant notes, only forty-four small pages, which treat of the copying of the Bible (Sepher Torah, in five chapters), of the Mezuzah, or memorial on the doorposts (in two chapters), of the Tsitsith, (Tephillin, in one chapter), of the Tsit-sith, or memorial-fringes (in one chapter), of Slaves (Abhadim, in three chapters) of the Cutheans, or Samaritans (in two chapters), and, finally, a curious tractate on Proselytes (Gerim, in four chapters).]

But when the Halakhah, however varied in its application, was something fixed and stable, the utmost latitude was claimed and given in the Haggadah. It is sadly characteristic, that, practically, the main body of Jewish dogmatic and moral theology is really only Haggadah, and hence of no absolute authority. The Halakhah indicated with the most minute and painful punctiliousness every legal ordinance as to outward observances, and it explained every bearing of the Law of Moses. But beyond this it left the inner man, the spring of actions, untouched.

What he was to believe and what to feel, was chiefly matter of the Haggadah. Of course the laws of morality, and religion, as laid down in the Pentateuch, were fixed principles, but there was the greatest divergence and latitude in the explanation and application of many of them. A man might hold or propound almost any views, so long as he contravened not the Law of Moses, as it was un-

derstood, and adhered in teaching and practice to the traditional ordinances. In principle it was the same liberty which the Roman Church accords to its professing members, only with much wider application, since the debatable ground embraced so many matters of faith, and the liberty given was not only that of private opinion but of public utterance.

We emphasize this, because the absence of authoritative direction and the latitude in matters of faith and inner feeling stand side by side, and in such sharp contrast, with the most minute punctiliousness in all matters of outward observance. And here we may mark the fundamental distinction between the teaching of Jesus and Rabbinism. He left the Halakhah untouched, putting it, as it were, on one side, as something quite secondary, while He insisted as primary on that which to them was chiefly matter of Haggadah.

And this rightly so, for, in His own words, 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth,' since 'those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man.' [St. Matt. xv. 11, 18.] The difference was one of fundamental principle, and not merely of development, form, or detail. The one developed the Law in its outward direction as ordinances and commandments; the other in its inward direction as life and liberty.

Thus Rabbinism occupied one pole, and the outcome of its tendency to pure externalism was the Halakhah, all that was internal and higher being merely Haggadic. The teaching of Jesus occupied the opposite pole. Its starting-point was the inner sanctuary in which God was known and worshipped, and it might well leave the Rabbinic Halakhoth aside, as not worth controversy, to be in the meantime 'done and observed,' in the firm assurance that, in the course of its development, the spirit would create its own appropriate forms, or, to use a New Testament figure, the new wine burst the old bottles.

And, lastly, as closely connected with all this, and marking the climax of contrariety: Rabbinism started with demand of outward obedience and righteousness, and pointed to sonship as its goal; the Gospel started with the free gift of forgiveness through faith and of sonship, and pointed to obedience and righteousness as its goal.

In truth, Rabbinism, as such, had no system of theology; only what ideas, conjectures, or fancies the Haggadah yielded concerning God, Angels, demons,

man, his future destiny and present position, and Israel, with its past history and coming glory. Accordingly, by the side of what is noble and pure, what a terrible mass of utter incongruities, of conflicting statements and too often debasing superstitions, the outcome of ignorance and narrow nationalism; of legendary coloring of Biblical narratives and scenes, profane, coarse, and degrading to them; the Almighty Himself and His Angels taking part in the conversations of Rabbis, and the discussions of Academies; nay, forming a kind of heavenly Sanhedrin, which occasionally requires the aid of an earthly Rabbi.

Thus, in B. Mez. 86 a, we read of a discussion in the heavenly Academy on the subject of purity, when Rabbah was summoned to heaven by death, although this required a miracle, since he was constantly engaged in sacred study. Shocking to write, it needed the authority of Rabbah to attest the correctness of the Almighty's statement on the Halakhic question discussed.

The miraculous merges into the ridiculous, and even the revolting. Miraculous cures, miraculous supplies, miraculous help, all for the glory of great Rabbis, who by a look or word can kill, and restore to life. At their bidding the eyes of a rival fall out, and are again inserted. Nay, such was the veneration due to Rabbis, that R. Joshua used to kiss the stone on which R. Eliezer had sat and lectured, saying: 'This stone is like Mount Sinai, and he who sat on it like the Ark.' Modern ingenuity has, indeed, striven to suggest deeper symbolical meaning for such stories.

It should own the terrible contrast existing side by side: Hebrewism and Judaism, the Old Testament and traditionalism; and it should recognize its deeper cause in the absence of that element of spiritual and inner life which Christ has brought. Thus as between the two - the old and the new - it may be fearlessly asserted that, as regards their substance and spirit, there is not a difference, but a total divergence, of fundamental principle between Rabbinism and the New Testament, so that comparison between them is not possible. Here there is absolute contrariety.

The painful fact just referred to is only too clearly illustrated by the relation in which traditionalism places itself to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, even though it acknowledges their inspiration and authority. The Talmud has it, that he who busies himself with Scripture only (i.e. without either the Mishnah or Gemara) has merit, and yet no merit.

Even the comparative paucity of references to the Bible in the Mishnah is significant Israel had made void the Law by its traditions.

Under a load of outward ordinances and observances its spirit had been crushed. The religion as well as the grand hope of the Old Testament had become externalized. And so alike Heathenism and Judaism - for it was no longer the pure religion of the Old Testament - each following its own direction, had reached its goal.

All was prepared and waiting. The very porch had been built, through which the new, and yet old, religion was to pass into the ancient world, and

the ancient world into the new religion. Only one thing was needed: the Coming of the Christ. As yet darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness lay upon the people. But far away the golden light of the new day was already tingeing the edge of the horizon.

Presently would the Lord arise upon Zion, and His glory be seen upon her. Presently would the Voice from out the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; presently would it herald the Coming of His Christ to Jew and Gentile, and that Kingdom of heaven, which, established upon earth, is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.