

נתיבות עולם

עמדו על דרכים וראו ושאלו לנתבות עלים ירמיהו טז

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THE noblest inquiry, to which the mental powers can be directed, is, Which religion comes from God? The most satisfactory mode of conducting such an inquiry, independently of the external evidence, is to compare the principles of one system with those of the other, and both with an acknowledged standard, if such there be, and this is what we are endeavouring to do in these papers. We by no means wish to make the modern Jews responsible for the inventions of their forefathers, but to show them that their traditional argument for rejecting Christianity, and that is the example of the high priest and the Sanhedrim, is of no force; inasmuch as these same persons, who originally rejected Jesus of Nazareth, were in great and grievous error in the fundamental principles of religion, whilst He who was rejected taught the truth. To do this we must appeal to the oral law, and discuss its merits. We have shown already that those persons did not understand at least one half of the law; that their doctrines were in the highest degree uncharitable. It has, however, been replied, that the Talmud is more tolerant than the New Testament, for it allows "that the pious of the nations of the world may be saved;" whereas the latter asserts that "whosoever believeth not shall be damned." We must, therefore, inquire into the extent of toleration and charity contained in that Talmudic sentence. The first step in this inquiry, is to ascertain who are the persons intended in the expression "The pious of the nations of the world." The oral law tells us, as quoted in No. 6, that the Israelites are commanded to compel all that come into the world to receive the seven commandments of the sons of Noah, and adds,

המקבל ארוח הוא הנקרא גר תושב בכל מקום

"He that receives them is called universally a sojourning proselyte." And a little lower down it says plainly,

כל המקבל שבע מצות ומוזר לעשותן הרי זה מוכרז ארוחו העולם ויש לו חלק לעולם הבא

"Whosoever receives the seven commandments, and is careful to observe them, he is one of the pious of the nations of the world, and has a share in the world to come." (Hilchoth Melachim, c. viii. 10.) From these two declarations, then, we learn that "the pious of the nations of the world" are the same as "the sojourning proselytes," who

were allowed to reside in the land of Israel, and that their piety consisted in receiving and practising the seven commandments. What these commandments were, we are informed in the next chapter of the same treatise.

על ששה דברים נצטווה אדם ראשון על עצי ועל ברכת השם ועל שפיכת דמים ועל גלוי שיהיה ועל הגזל ועל הרמיים אף על פי שכתוב הן קבלה בדינו משה רבינו ודוד נוסח לחן סמל דברי תורה יראה שעל אלה נצטווה הוסף לנו אבר סן הדי שטמור אך בשם בנפש רבו לא תאכלו נמצאו שבע מצות וכן היה הדבר בכל השלם עד אברהם

"The first Adam was commanded concerning six things—idolatry, blasphemy, shedding of blood, incest, robbery, and administration of justice. Although we have all these things as a tradition from Moses, our master, and reason naturally inclines to them, yet, from the general tenour of the words of the law, it appears that he was commanded concerning these things. Noah received an additional command concerning the limb of a living animal, as it is said, 'But flesh in the life thereof which is the blood thereof, ye shall not eat.' (Gen. ix. 4.) Here are the seven commandments, and thus the matter was in all the world until Abraham." (Ibid. ix. 1.)

Now, without stopping to dispute about the command given to Noah, we cannot help saying that the above tradition is very defective, and certainly not derived from Moses, for it is opposed to the history which he himself has given us. In the first place, that command, on which the oral law lays such stress, "Be fruitful and multiply," was originally given to Adam (Gen. i. 28), and was renewed to Noah, after the deluge. If the rabbies reckon this as a separate command in the case of the Jews, as may be seen in the Hilchoth Priah Ureviah, it is only fair to reckon it as a separate command in the case of the Gentiles, and thus we get an eighth command. In the second place, God ordained marriage as a holy state. "The Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him." "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." Here is God's holy institution, and in the following verses we have the obligations of marriage distinctly acknowledged. "And Adam said, This is

now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." Here then is a ninth commandment. We know, indeed, that the oral law gives a different account, but its doctrine is false and pernicious. In the face of the above plain narrative, it teaches as follows :—

קודם כמות תורה היה אדם פגע אשה בשוק אם רצה היא חזת לישא אותה מכניסה לתוך ביתו ובעלה ביתו לבין עצמו ויהיה לו לאשה :

"Before the giving of the law, a man might happen to meet a woman in the street; if they both agreed on marriage, he took her to his house, and cohabited with her, and she became his wife." (Hilchoth Ishuth, c. i. 1.) Now, not to speak of profane history, there is not in the law of Moses a single passage to give colour to this statement, unless it be the following :— "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." But, whatever is meant by "Sons of God," it is plain that this conduct is mentioned, not as having the sanction or approval of God, but as a proof of antediluvian wickedness, for it is immediately added, "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." But it is not simply an error of judgment, it is most pernicious as it regards both Gentiles and Jews, for it completely annuls the sanctity and obligation of the marriage tie. It teaches that as the marriage of Noahites is contracted without solemn espousals, so it may be dissolved without the formality of a divorce.

וכאמרו חז"ל חזת אשה חבירו נרשעה שלנו? משויצאנה מביתו וישלחנה לעצמה. או משחזנה היא מחזרת רשותו ותקף לה. שאין להם גירושין בבת. והאן דהבר תלוי בו לבר. אלא כל זמן שרצתה הוא או היא לפרוש זה מזה פורשין.

"When is his (the Noahites) neighbour's wife to be considered in the same light, as a divorced woman with us? From the time that he sends her forth from his house, and leaves her to herself. Or from the time that she goes forth from under his power, and goes her way; for they have no divorces in writing, neither does the matter depend upon that alone;* but whenever he or she please to separate one from the other, they separate." (Hilchoth Melachim, c. ix. 8.) We Gentiles have great reason to be thankful that Jesus of Nazareth has taught us a different doctrine, according with the original institution

* Instead of *alone*, there is another reading, "לפני הדין."

of marriage. What would have been the state of the world, if the oral law had attained supreme power, and the Gentiles had been instructed in the above law as divine? What would result from the doctrine that every man may turn out his wife, and every woman leave her husband, whenever they like? The peace and well-being of Gentile society would be at an end. The frightful state of disorder and misery that would ensue, as well as the words of the original institution, plainly show that this doctrine is not from God. But the effect upon the believers in the oral law is still worse. With reference to them, the marriage of Gentiles is no marriage at all. The oral law says distinctly—

אין אשה לגוים.

"There is no matrimony to the Gentiles." (Hilchoth Melachim, viii. 3.) And again—

אין אשה האל לישורא או לגוים על הגוים אבל לא לגוים על הגוים ולא לגוים על ישראל.

"There is no matrimony except to Israel, or to Gentiles with respect to Gentiles; but not to slaves with respect to slaves, nor to slaves with respect to Israel." (Hilchoth Issure Biah, c. xiv. 19.) Here, then, the oral law directly makes void the law of God, and pronounces that a command given to Adam in paradise, and therefore equally binding on all his descendants, is in particular cases of no force at all. The oral law, therefore, is certainly not from God.

We have already made out nine commandments; in sacrifice we find a tenth. Cain and Abel brought sacrifices, and the only reason that can be assigned is, that they had received a command to that effect. Sacrifice was either a divine command or the dictate of their own reason. But it was not the dictate of reason, for reason says, that the Creator of all things has no need of gifts, and, least of all, such gifts as imply the slaughter of an innocent animal. It must, therefore, have been of divine command. The reason why the rabbies excluded this command is plain. They did not choose that there should be acceptable sacrifices offered any where but amongst themselves. But that this doctrine is altogether of a recent date is plain. It was not known to Job. He says nor a word about the seven commandments, and he was in the habit of offering sacrifices. "And it was so when the day of their feasting was gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all." (Job i. 5.) And the Lord himself expressly commanded Job's friends to do so likewise. "And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee,

and against thy two friends. . . . Therefore, take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept." (Job xlii. 7, 8.) It was not known to Elisha. When Naaman said, "Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? For thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord." (2 Kings v. 17.) Elisha made no objection. He did not tell him that he had only seven commandments to attend to. Neither had Isaiah any idea that, when Judaism triumphed, the whole world was to be compelled to adhere to the seven commandments, for he plainly predicts the contrary. "And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it." (Isaiah xix. 21.) Here again, then, the oral law contradicts the Word of God.

But the law of God points out to us an eleventh commandment, in the distinction between clean and unclean animals. The Lord commanded Noah to take of the former by sevens and of the latter by pairs. (Gen. vii. 2.) And when Noah came forth from the ark "he builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." (Gen. viii. 2.) It is plain, from the command, that a greater number of clean than unclean animals was required. Noah's conduct shows that the rite of sacrifice was the cause of the requirement. We have a twelfth commandment in the appointment of a priesthood. "Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High God," (Gen. xiv. 18,) which he most certainly could not have been, if he had not been divinely appointed. From the law itself, then, we have made out twelve distinct commandments. Eight would have been sufficient to overthrow the oral tradition. But we appeal to the common sense of every Talmudist. We ask him to look over the meagre list of the seven commandments, in which neither love to God nor man is included, and to tell us whether it be at all probable that "the God of the spirits of all flesh" would leave all mankind, excepting the small company of Rabbinites, without any better rule for time, and any better guide to eternity? Is it possible that the God of love and mercy should leave the majority of his reasonable creatures in doubt as to his love, and tell them that he requires no love from them? Yet this is what the oral law says. The Gentiles are, according to it, left without any direction as to the worship of God, and are pronounced guilty of death if they study the law. Nay, they are expressly told that God does not require them to glorify him by their obedience.

בן נח שאמר אם לעבר על אחת מצדדיו: מורה
לעבר. אשלו נאנס לעבר ע"ז שוב. לשי שארין
מצדדיו על קירש השם.

"A Noahite who is forced to transgress one of his commandments, it is lawful for him to do so. Even if he be compelled to commit idolatry he may commit it, for they are not commanded to sanctify God." (Hilchoth Melachim, c. x. 2.) So that, according to the rabbies, the Noahite who is compelled to commit murder, adultery, or even to deny his God, may do it with impunity; he still belongs "to the pious of the nations of the world," and may have a share in the world to come. We confess that we cannot see in this doctrine either charity or toleration. We can discover only that narrowness of heart which characterizes the oral law. In order to magnify themselves, and depreciate the other nations, the rabbies first swell out their own commandments to 613, and reduce the commandments of the nations to seven. But not content with that, they also strive to confine the glories of martyrdom to themselves, and tell the Gentiles that God does not require them to sanctify His name. Can such doctrine come from God? Is God the God of the Rabbinites only? We grant that the Jews are his "peculiar people." We acknowledge that "they have much advantage every way"—that "they are beloved for the fathers' sakes"—that the time is coming when "all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed whom the Lord has blessed." But we still think that God's heart is large enough to comprehend us Gentiles too in his love. We know that we are the work of His hand, and we trust that, as He is our father, he requires, and is pleased to see even in Gentiles, the feelings of children, love and filial fear. And we found this our faith on your Scriptures as well as ours. The Word of God tells us that, long before there were any rabbies in the world, He had a gracious and tender care for all mankind. He promised to our first parents a Saviour who should "bruise the serpent's head." He saved Noah and his family, not one of whom was a rabbi, from the deluge; and when they came forth from the ark, He made a gracious covenant not with one nation only, but "with all flesh," and hung up on high a lovely and glittering arch, from one end of the heavens to the other, that all the habitants of earth might have a token of their Father's love, and learn to look up to Him with humble confidence. When he chose Abraham and his seed, it was not an act of partiality, but that in his seed all the families of the earth might be blessed. He did not leave himself without witness to the nations. He manifested himself to Job, and taught him "that his Redeemer liveth," and moved even the prophets of Israel to predict again and again the happy

times when, "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, His name should be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense should be offered to his name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." (Mal. i. 11.) Having this word, we reject the oral law which contradicts it, and would make God the God of the Rabbinites only; and we believe in the New Testament, which exactly agrees with your written law, and asks, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles?"—and answers, "Yes, of the Gentiles also" (Rom. iii. 29)—and which also declares that, in the sight of God, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. x. 12, 13.)

In the fixing of the commandments, then, for the sons of Noah, we have detected an intolerant and uncharitable spirit very different from that of the Old and New Testament. But we have further to inquire, what was the extent of toleration conceded to them. We do not stop to prove that they were not allowed to possess land, nor to be judges, nor members of the Sanhedrin, nor to hold any office, nor to intermarry with the Jews. From all that, they were excluded by the law of God himself. They were allowed to sojourn in the land, and hence their name "sojourning proselytes." Further, "They were to be treated with the same courtesy and benevolence as the Israelites." (See No. 4, p. 13.) But further than this the toleration did not extend. The oral law, though it commands "courtesy and benevolence," does not administer even-handed justice to "the pious of the nations of the world," as may be seen from the following specimens:—

ישראל שדדג בשגנה או העבר או את גר תושב גולה
 וכן גר תושב שדדג את גר תושב או את העבר
 בשגנה גולה

גר תושב שדדג את ישראל בשגנה או על פי שדדג
 שגג דרי זה שדדג

"An Israelite who unintentionally kills a slave, or a sojourning proselyte, is imprisoned (in one of the cities of refuge)."

"And so a sojourning proselyte who unintentionally kills a sojourning proselyte, or a slave, is imprisoned."

"A sojourning proselyte who unintentionally kills an Israelite, although he did it un-

intentionally, is to be put to death." (Hilchoth Rotzeach, c. v. 3.) The written law, on the contrary, says, "These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that any one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither." (Numbers xxxv. 15.) Again, the oral law says—

ישראל שדדג גר תושב אינו דדדג עליו בבית דין
 שגמרו וכי ידד אש על רשדו

"An Israelite who kills a sojourning Proselyte, is not put to death on his account by the tribunal, for it is said, 'But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour.' (Exodus xxi. 14.) The law of God says, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.' (Gen. ix. 6.) And to this law the New Testament commands us Christians to adhere, rejecting the oral traditions; and in consequence the laws of Christian countries make no difference between the murderer of a Jew, a Christian, Turk, Infidel, or Heretic. Short as all Christian nations confessedly come of the pure morality of the New Testament, their laws direct the administration of impartial justice, and are a terror to all evil doers of every creed and sect. The liberality of the Talmud then, in allowing a share of salvation to the pious of the world is not so very great, nor its toleration of a very comprehensive character. It not only withholdeth justice from the pious of the world, but gives as the reason, because they are not considered as neighbours. Want of room prevents us from pursuing this subject further at present. We therefore ask, Is this law from God? Can God, in an oral law, directly contradict his written law? Can you point out any thing similar in the New Testament? Is this law just or unjust? You will grant that it is unjust and erroneous. Then your fathers have been mistaken about one of the first principles of the administration of justice, for many centuries. And your brethren who adhere to this system as divine, as on the Barbary coast, for instance, are still mistaken. Why do you not protest aloud against such error? Why not endeavour to convince your brethren that they are wrong? In England there is nothing to prevent you. There is full liberty, free toleration. You may lift up your voice like a trumpet against the errors of the Talmud. You may expunge all acknowledgment of its authority from your prayers—you may return to Moses and the prophets, and no man will say nay.

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