

נתיבות עולם

עמדו על דרכים וראו ושאלו לנתיבות עולם ירמיהו טז

"THE OLD PATHS."—Jer. vi. 16.

NUMBER 29.

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IN our last number but one the Bible doctrine, that true religion must necessarily promote the happiness of man, was laid down as the basis of our reasonings. The truth of the principle is admitted by every thinking man, whether Jew or Christian; but plain as it is, it is frequently overlooked, and a large portion of mankind is accustomed to look on religion and its ordinances, not as blessings in themselves, nor as a course of moral discipline devised by the wisdom of God for the good of man, but as a system of arbitrary enactments instituted to give men an opportunity of treasuring up a store of merit, and of earning an eternal reward. Hence in all the superstitions, which man has invented, we perceive an undue regard for the mere external act; and an expectation that the performance of the act will ensure the Divine favour. Thus the modern Hindoo stands on a sharp spike, or suspends his poor body by an iron hook, or offers it to be crushed under the wheels of the idol's chariot, and thinks thereby to purchase eternal felicity. And thus also the more ancient idolaters, the worshippers of Baal in the time of their need, wounded themselves with knives and lances, and expected that for such meritorious religious observances their prayers should be heard and that they should have a blessing. But it is possible, without professing a totally false religion, to view God's true commandments in the same light, and overlooking the spirit and the object of his institution, to fix the whole attention upon the letter or outward act, and the quantum of reward which it may purchase. This the rabbies have done, particularly, in reference to the institution of the Sabbath-day. They appear to have forgotten altogether that the Sabbath was made for man as a blessing and means of grace, and have therefore in their attempts to promote the observance of the day, entirely sacrificed the peace, comfort, and happiness of man to the mere appearance of preserving the letter of the command inviolate. Their fundamental idea of keeping the Sabbath-day is, that it is an act of obedience whereby something may be purchased.

גוסינן בני כל חובי אי' יתון משום ו' יוסי כל המענג
 השבת נתנין לו נחלה בלא מצרים רב נחמן בר יצחק
 אמר אף ניצול משיעבוד מלכותי אמר רב יהודה אמר
 רב כל המענג שבת נתנין לו משאלות לנו : ואי' הייא
 בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן כל המשמר שבת כהלכה אשילו

עובד ע"ז מאנוש מודלין לו אמר רב יהודה אמר רב
 אלמלא שמרו ישראל שבת ראשונה כהלכה לא שלמה
 בהם אומה ולשון אמר ר' שמעון בר יוחי אלמלא
 משמרו ישראל שתי שבתות נגאלין :

"We read in the sixteenth chapter of the treatise Shabbath, R. Johanan says, in the name of R. Jose, that to every one, who makes the Sabbath a delight, an infinite inheritance is given. Rav Nachman, the son of Isaac, says, He shall, besides, be delivered from serving the monarchies. R. Judah says, Rav says, To every one, who makes the Sabbath a delight, the desires of his heart are given. R. Chiia, the son of Abba, says, In the name of Rabbi Johanan, whoeover keeps the Sabbath according to its constitutions, even though he were an idolater like Enosh, he shall be forgiven. R. Judah says, Rav says, If Israel would keep the first Sabbath according to its constitutions, no nation nor tongue should rule over them. R. Simeon, the son of Jochai, says, If Israel would keep two Sabbaths, they should be immediately delivered." (Arbah Turim. Orach Chaiim § 242.) Thus the rabbies sanction the false and superstitious notion, that an external act can purchase the favour of God, and even atone for the most atrocious violation of the divine law. The Israelites are taught to believe that if they would only observe the Sabbath according to the Rabbinic constitution, all their other transgressions would immediately be forgiven, and they themselves restored to the land of their fathers, and in the meanwhile the individual sinner is told not to be uneasy, for that if he had committed idolatry, the most heinous offence against God, the observance of the Rabbinical precepts respecting the Sabbath will wipe away the score. What then will he think, who has ever kept himself outwardly from this capital offence, and only been guilty as he thinks of sinning against his neighbour? He will make sure that the Sabbath observance will wipe out the week's reckoning, and commence his sinful career again the following week with the assurance, that if he only live until the Sabbath-day, he can make all good again. And thus the Sabbath-day, ordained by God for the purpose of nurturing true religious feeling, is by the oral law turned into the means of eradicating all religious principle out of the heart. The end for which the external observance was

instituted is not only forgotten, but misrepresented. The holy affections which it was meant to produce and nourish as a preparation for eternity are overlooked, and the mere outward form held up as the price which men are to pay for eternal felicity.

That the Rabbinical laws are almost altogether occupied with the merest external observances will be plain to any one who will take the trouble to read them through. Take, for instance, some of the laws which refer to the keeping food warm on the Sabbath-day:—

מנדין קדרה על גבי האש או בשד בהגרו או על גבי גדלים והן מתבשלים דחולקין כל השבת ואוכלין אותו בשבת. ויש דברי זה דברים שהם אסורין גזירה שמא יחרה בגדלים בשבת: כיצד תבשל שלא בשל כל צרכו והמין שלא יחרהו כל צרכן או תבשל בשבל כל צרכו וכל זמן שמיצטמק הוא ישי לה אין משדחין אותו על גבי האש בשבת אף על פי שהגנה מבעוד יום. גזירה שמא יחרה בגדלים כדי להשלים בשלו או כדי לצמק. לשיך אם גרף האש או שנסה אש הכירה באר או בנעורת השפתן הדקה או שצממו הגדלים שדחי הן כמכוסות באר או שהשקיהו בקש או בגנבה או בגללי ברמס דקה שדחי אין שם גדלים ברשות היו זה מותר לשרות עליה שדחי הסיה דעתו מזה ואין גורין שמא יחרה באש:

“It is lawful to leave a pot on the fire, or meat in the oven or upon the coals, and although the cooking thus continues, it is lawful to eat them on the Sabbath. But in this matter there are some things forbidden, and the cause of the prohibition is, lest any man should stir the fire on the Sabbath. For example, food that has not been cooked as much as it requires, or hot water that has not been sufficiently heated, or food which has had the requisite cooking, but which improves all the time that it is left to stew, must not be left on the fire on the Sabbath, even though it may have been placed there, whilst it was yet day on the Friday. This has been decreed, lest one should stir the coals in order to finish the cooking thereof, or to stew it. Therefore, if the fire be swept up, or covered with ashes, or with the coarse part of flax, or if the coals have ceased to glow, for then they are looked upon as covered with ashes, or if the fire had been made with straw or stubble, or with the dung of small cattle, then, as there are no burning coals, it is lawful to leave the food there on the Sabbath, for in this case the man's mind will be turned away from the cooking, and the only object of the decree is, lest the fire should be stirred.” (Hilchoth Shabbath, c. iii. 3.) No one can deny that this passage prescribes the merest outward observances. The general principle is that it is not lawful to stir the fire on the Sabbath, for that would be doing work, and from this follow those other prohibitions of all things which might tempt a

man to be guilty of this grave offence. But they all refer to outward acts, from which it is easy for any one, without any great exertion of self-denial, or any advance in moral discipline, to abstain, and yet he has all the merit and satisfaction of the most self-denying piety, and thinks that he is thereby paying a part of the price of his salvation, and making atonement for the gravest moral transgressions of which he may have been guilty during the week. Take, again, the following precepts, and say whether they be not of the very same character:—

מי שהשחין לו בדרך בשבת ועמו כס או כסף עמו נכרי וחמור יתן כסו לנכרי אף לאחר שחשך ולא יניחנו על החמור. אבל אם מצא מציאה אינו יכול ליהנה לנכרי אלא אם כן באה לירו מבעוד יום והשאת היום ככסו: אף עמו נכרי יניחנו על החמור כשהוא הולך. ויהא ליכול ממנו בכל שעה שיצמוד וכשיחזור וילך יניחנו עליו: היה עמו חמור. חרש. שושה. וקטן. יניחנו על החמור ולא יתנו לאחר מאלה כיון שהם אדם כמותו: היה עמו דוש שושה יתנו לשושה לפי שאין לו דעת כלל: שושה וקטן יתנו לשושה שהקטן יבא לכל דעת: דוש וקטן יתנו למי שרצה: אף עמו לא זה ולא זה ישלשנו פתוח פתוח מארבע אמות:

“If a man travelling on the Sabbath-eve be overtaken by night,* and has with him a purse, and there be also with him a Gentile and an ass, let him give his purse to the Gentile, even after it be dark, but let him not lay it on the ass.† But if he find any thing, he may not give it to the Gentile, unless it came into his hand whilst it was yet day, for then it is a similar case to that of his purse. If there be no Gentile with him, then let him lay it on the ass, whilst he is moving, but let him take great care to take it off every time he stands still. But when he begins to move again, then let him lay it on. If there be with him an ass, and a deaf and dumb person, an idiot and a child, then let him lay it on the ass, but let him not give to one of these, for they are human beings like himself. If there be with him a deaf and dumb person and an idiot, let him give it to the idiot, as he has no understanding at all. If an idiot and a child, let him give it to the idiot, for the child will be reckoned amongst those that have understanding. If a deaf and dumb person and a child, let him give it to whichever he pleases. If there be with him neither one nor the other, let him move it along gradually, each time less than four ells.” (Orach. Chaim., sec. 266.) Here again the great concern is to observe the form and letter of the rabbinical command, which represents the carrying of a purse on the Sabbath-day

* That is, if the Sabbath commence before he can get to a resting place.

† דחמור יהיה מצודה על שבתו ולא דנכרי: For thou art commanded respecting the resting of the ass, but not respecting that of the Gentile.

as work, and therefore unlawful. The law of Moses says nothing either one way or the other, but leaves it to every man's conscience. The rabbies who made it unlawful soon found that serious inconvenience might arise, as in the case of a man on a journey overtaken by the Sabbath, before he could get to a resting-place. What is he to do, is he to leave his purse behind rather than profane the Sabbath? That alternative the Pharisees did not like, and therefore set their wits to work to devise some plan, whereby the outward form might be observed, and yet the purse be safely conveyed along with its proprietor. In the first place, they allow it to be given to a Gentile, but every man of common sense will see that this only saves the outward appearance, for if it be unlawful to carry the purse, it must be equally unlawful to cause it to be carried, for he who commands or causes work to be done is really and in the sight of God the doer, just as he who hires a man to murder a third person is in reality the murderer. If, therefore, the Jew dare not carry the purse himself, neither may he give it to a Gentile, nor an idiot, nor a child, nor even lay it upon his ass. This case only shows the insincerity of the Scribes and Pharisees, and their love of money rather than of God's commandment. In other cases they lay it down as a law that no Jew is to ask a Gentile to do work for him on the Sabbath.

אסור לומר לגוי לעשות לנו מלאכה בשבת אף על פי שאינו מצווה על השבת ואף על פי שאסור לו מקדום השבת ואף על פי שאינו צריך לאותה מלאכה אלא לאחר השבת. ודבר זה אסור מדברי סופרים כדי שלא יהיה שבת קלה בעיניך ויבוא לעשות בעצמך:

"It is unlawful to tell a Gentile to do work for us on the Sabbath, although the Sabbath command is not binding upon him, and although he told him before the Sabbath, and even though he should not require that work until after the Sabbath. This prohibition is of the words of the Scribes, and was made to prevent Israelites from thinking lightly of the Sabbath, and thus coming at last to do the work themselves." (Hilchoth Sabbath, c. vi. 1.) Here, then, the very thing which is allowed above, is expressly forbidden on the authority of the Scribes, and consequently a transgression would make a man liable to be flogged, as is expressly stated in this chapter.

ישראל שאמר לגוי לעשות לו מלאכה זו בשבת אף על פי שצריך ומכין אותו מכות מדרות מותר לו ליהנות באוהה מלאכה לערב אחר שימתין בכרי שהעשה:

"An Israelite who tells a Gentile to do a certain work for him on the Sabbath, although he has transgressed, and is to be flogged with the flogging of rebellion, yet he may lawfully make use of that work when the Sabbath is over, if he wait as long as it would take to

accomplish the work." (Ibid, 8.) These two passages, then, plainly contradict each other. The one says it is unlawful to tell a Gentile to do work on the Sabbath, and that he who does so is to be flogged. The other permits a Jew to give a Gentile his purse to carry, and this is work, or else the Jew might carry it himself. Now if the latter case be lawful, then the former is also lawful; and it is most cruel and tyrannical to flog a man for doing what is lawful. On the other hand, if, according to the general rule, it be unlawful, then it is plainly unlawful in this particular case; and it is plain that the Scribes, with all their pretensions, thought it better to transgress what they considered a divine command, than to lose their money. But if the traveller has got neither an ass, nor an idiot, nor a Gentile with him, then there is apparently no way of escape, for it is unlawful, according to the oral law, to carry any burden more than a distance of four ells on the Sabbath-day; and one would naturally expect, that those who punish a profanation of the Sabbath with stoning or flogging—that is, who spare neither human blood nor life—would tell him to leave his purse, rather than transgress the Divine command. But no, they tell him to carry it less than four ells, then to lay it down, take it up and carry it again a distance of less than four ells, and thus, bit by bit, carry it to the first inn. Here, again, there is an appearance of preserving the letter of the Rabbinical command; but no man in his senses can see that there is any real difference between carrying it at one turn, or at five hundred short turns of less than four ells, the whole distance is just the same, and the work just the same in the sight of God. Either it is altogether lawful, and then the Rabbinical precepts appear as folly and tyranny, or it is altogether unlawful, and then these precepts appear as a mere evasion and a trick. But, in every case, a cheap way is presented for purchasing salvation, and atoning for past sin. There is no great exertion of moral principle necessary to make the traveller let another person, or an ass carry his purse to an inn.

Another part of the Rabbinical mode of observing the Sabbath, the preparation of the Sabbath table, has just the same tendency to direct the mind to the mere external act.

ויסוד שלחנו ויציע הכנסת ויתקן כל עניני הבית כדי שימצאנו שרץ ומסדר בבואו מבית הכנסת דא"ד יוס"ב" הניא שני מלאכי השדת מלחין לו לאדם בע"ש מבית הכנסת לביטו אחד טוב ואחד רע כשגב לביטו מצא טו רלוק ושלחן שרץ ומסדה מוצעת מלאך טוב ואומר ידי רצון שיהא כן לשבת הגאה ומלאך רע עונה אמן בעל כרחו ואם לאו מלאך רע ואומר ידי רצון שיהא כן לשבת הגאה ומלאך טוב עונה בעל כרחו:

"Let a man arrange his table and spread

the couches, and order all the affairs of his house, that he may find it ready and ordered when he returns from the synagogue; for Rabbi Jose says, in the name of Rabbi Chanina, That two angels accompany a man on the Sabbath eve, on his return from the synagogue, the one good, the other evil. When he comes to his house, if the Sabbath lamp be found lighted, and the table prepared, and the couch spread, the good angel says, God grant that it may be so the next Sabbath; and the evil angel must say Amen, in spite of himself. But if this be not the case, then the evil angel says, God grant that it may be so on the next Sabbath, and then the good spirit must say Amen, in spite of himself." (Orach Chaim, § 262.) Let not the Israelite think that we object to the decent and reverential preparation of the house for the Sabbath, that is all right and proper; but to exalt this into a command, and represent obedience to it as a meritorious act, is to turn the mind to trivial outward performances, and to teach men to rest on them as on the great duties of religion. And here the mere putting of the house into order is represented as so grave a matter, that two angels are sent home with every Israelite on the Sabbath eve, to take cognizance of the matter. The story of the angels is evidently a fable, and is another proof of the fictitious character of the oral law; but it shows how the rabbies wandered from the substance of religion to the mere shadow of external observances. The Sabbath lamp here mentioned is another instance of the same kind.

וידא דדיר לעשות נר יפה דאמר רב הונא דהרגל בנר
שבח להשתדל בו לעשותו יפה הויין ליה בני תלמידי
דכמיים :

"Let a man be careful to have a handsome lamp, for Rav Huna says, He that is accustomed to take great care in trimming his Sabbath lamp well, will have children who shall be disciples of the wise, i.e. learned men." No one can deny that this is a mere external act, but yet it is represented as meritorious, and payment is promised: but the mode in which the performance is required is still more calculated to promote the idea, that this external act is of great importance.

ואחד אנשים אחד נשים דייבין בתתקן נר ולקח
בשבת אפילו אין לו מה יאכל שואל על השתדלים ולקח

שמן ומדליק את הנר שזה בכלל עונג שבת ודיבין לנר
קדם הדלקה ברוך אהיה " אלהינו כמך העולם אשר
קשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת :

"Men and women are equally obligated to have a lighted lamp in their house on the Sabbath. Yea, though a man have nothing to eat, he must beg from door to door, and get oil, and light the lamp, for this is an essential part of the Sabbath delight. He is also bound to pronounce the benediction, Blessed art thou, O Lord, King of the world, who has sanctified us by his commandments, and commanded us to light the Sabbath lamp." (Hilchoth Shabbath, c. v. 1.) Of course every Jew, who thinks that a Sabbath lamp is as necessary as food, and that God requires it even from him that has no food, must think that it is of great value, and that obedience to this command is a most meritorious act. And yet all must confess that it is a mere outward performance, which may be observed by him who has neither the fear nor the love of God. The tendency of all these laws is the same, that is, to draw the mind away from the solemn duties of religion, and to persuade the impenitent sinner that these observances will atone for his transgressions. When conscience reminds him of sins, not those which he has committed long since, of which he has repented, and which he has forsaken, but of those which he has been committing the past week, and intends to commit again, as soon as the Sabbath is over, it is silenced by an enumeration of the various acts of obedience, which are to be set down at the other side of the account. He remembers that he has never left a pot of victuals on a forbidden fire, nor carried his purse on the Sabbath-day a distance of more than four ells, nor asked a Gentile to do work for him. That, on the contrary, he has always prepared his table, and lighted his Sabbath lamp, and pronounced the benediction; or, in other words, that he has kept the Sabbath according to its constitution, and that, therefore, though he had been guilty of idolatry, he shall obtain forgiveness. Thus these rabbinic precepts have a direct tendency to mislead the multitude, to harden them in sin, and thus to make and keep them unfit for that great Sabbath, which yet remains for the people of God.

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עמדו על דרכים וראו ושאלו לנתיבות עולם ירמיהו טז

"THE OLD PATHS."—Jer. vi. 16.

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THAT religion, which is true, and has God for its author, is, like the light of the sun, the common property of all who will only open their eyes, and gaze upon the gift of God. It is not a religion for the rich or the studious only, but is equally open to the understanding and the hearts of the poor and unlearned. And therefore the Bible describes the heavenly wisdom thus—"She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths; she crieth at the gates at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors: Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be of an understanding heart." (Prov. viii. 2—5.) And so God invites men of every class by the mouth of the prophet—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isai. lv. 1.) Every religion of man's making, presents, on the contrary, peculiar advantages to the rich and the learned.

It offers salvation either as the purchase of alms-giving, or as the reward of religious study, or it makes religion so difficult and intricate as to put it out of the poor labouring man's power to acquire any competent knowledge of its requirements. And any system that does so must necessarily be false. Religion is as necessary to the soul as day-light is to the corporeal eye; and it would be a hard case, indeed, if the poor, who want it most, should be excluded from the possibility of acquiring its consolations; or if, in the day of judgment, the man who devotes his life to books should have a better chance, than he who labours hard to get an honest living for himself and his family; yet this is the case with the labouring classes of the Jews. The religion of the oral law has so perplexed even the simplest commandments, that an unlearned man has no chance of being able to keep them. If nothing more were required for salvation than the Rabbinic sanctification of the Sabbath-day, the majority of the Jewish people must despair of attaining it; for the accurate knowledge of the innumerable precepts and distinctions, which is indispensable to obedience, requires time and study, which no labouring man can bestow. And we are convinced that a considerable portion of the

Jewish population of this city live in continual profanation of the Sabbath-day, if the Rabbinic explanations be true. Either they move something which they ought not to move, or they carry something which they ought not to carry; and, if they do it wilfully, render themselves liable to the utmost severity of the law. For instance, the rabbies have determined that in one place it is lawful to move or carry certain things on the Sabbath-day, but in another place the very same act is unlawful, and calls down extreme punishment. They distinguish between these places thus—

ארבע שריות לשבת · רשות היחיד ורשות הרבים · כרמלית ומקום פסור · רשות היחיד הוא המקום המוקף מדריכות גבהות עשרה רש בו ארבעה ספדים על ארבעה אפי' אם יש בו כמה מילין אם מוקף לזירה ולתחתיו נעלות בלילה היו רשות היחיד · היד וסדרו חצו' · וכן הוצי' עמוק עשרה ורחב ד' על ד' או יותר וכן תל גבה' · ורחב ארבעה על ארבעה · וכחלים המוקפים רשות היחיד על גבהן חזרה'ן דה' · ואיר רשות היחיד הוא דה' · עד לקיץ ואסלו כלי אם גבה' · ורחב ד' על ד' כגון תבה' · או כורה או מגדל · היו רשות היחיד · ור"ה הוא רחובות ושוקים הרחבין י" · אמה על י" אמה ומסלשים משער לשער וששים רבוא עוברין בו · וכל דבר שהוא בר"ה ואינו גבה ג' ספדים חשוב כקרקע והוא רשות הרבים אסילו קציים או צואה שאין רבים דורסין עליהם · ואם הוא גבה ג' ומעט ש' ולא מ' בכלל אם הוא רחב ד' על ד' היו כרמלית פחות מכתן היו מקום פסור ·

In reference to the Sabbath, places are distinguished into four sorts of jurisdiction. 1st, the private jurisdiction; 2d, the public jurisdiction; 3d, the place called Karmelith; 4th, the place which is free.

By a *private jurisdiction* is meant a place surrounded by walls, ten handbreadths high, and in which there is a space of four handbreadths by four. But even though it should contain many miles, if it be inclosed for habitation, and its gates be bolted at night, it is a private jurisdiction. A lodging-place, an inclosed space, and a court, are considered as in the same class. And thus, also, a pit which is ten handbreadths deep, and whose breadth is four by four, or more; and a raised place which is ten handbreadths high, and whose breadth is four by four. The top of the walls, also, by which a private jurisdiction is surrounded, and the openings in them, are considered as private jurisdiction. The air of a private jurisdiction, up to the firmament,