

*THE RESULTS OF THE EXILE, AND THE ORIGIN  
OF PHARISAISM.*

THERE is scarcely perhaps in all history any exact parallel to the utter change wrought in the character and destinies of the Jewish nation by the Babylonian Exile. Up to the period when the Ten Tribes were swept into irrevocable captivity, they had, since the days of Jeroboam, continued without intermission that worship of the calves at Dan and Bethel which, though it was *nominally* a worship of Jehovah, and though the calves were *nominally* cherubic emblems, at once met a political difficulty, and gratified the national impulse to worship visible symbols. At times, and those by no means infrequent, they had swerved into darker and far more reprehensible idolatries, which violated not only the second commandment but the first, and which involved rites of frightful disobedience to every commandment alike. So far from being exclusively monotheistic, as has too sweepingly been assumed to be the case with all Semitic nations, both the northern and the southern kingdom had over and over again succumbed to the hideous spell exercised over their imaginations by the monstrous and polluted Nature-worships—the mixtures of lust and cruelty—the worship of Moloch and Chemosh, and of the hosts of heaven, the

Baalim and Ashtaroth,  
Those male, these feminine,

to which the neighbouring nations were unreservedly devoted. Even Judah, corrupted partly by the fatal example of Solomon, and especially by the alliance of the royal houses of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, had suffered from the infection. Queen Maacha, though she was the granddaughter of Absalom, had set up in the very temple precincts an obscene Asherah.<sup>1</sup> King Ahaziah sent openly to inquire of Beelzebub, god of Ekron. Serpent worship, an universal instinct of idolatry, forced Hezekiah to brand with a name of contempt, and to break to pieces, the brazen serpent of the wilderness. Ahaz had borrowed from Syria the pattern of a heathen altar. Manasseh passed his son through the fire to Moloch. The denunciation of idolatrous tendencies was the main burden of the prophetic messages.

2. But when we see the Jews once more, a feeble colony indeed, yet in possession of their own land, it seems as if this tendency had been utterly eradicated. An intense feeling of *nationality* has ever characterized the Jews, and when that nationality seemed in danger of utter and final extinction; when Jerusalem lay waste; when the place of their fathers' sepulchres lay broken and neglected; when the golden temple was a heap of stones, here stained with blood, there charred with fire; when it seemed but too probable that the whole splendid history which had thrilled their hearts with immortal memories would be choked up like a river which is lost in mud and sand—every manly and pious feel-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xv. 13. She had set up, not as it is in the English Version, "an idol in a grove," but "a horror;" i.e., a phallic symbol, "for an Asherah."

ing of their souls, every unselfish instinct, every far-reaching hope, took refuge in sacred memories, in sacred songs, in sacred observances. They recalled the grand patriarchal simplicity of their fathers Abraham and Isaac, ruling like innocent and noble sheykhs over the pastoral tents of their followers. They dwelt on the touching story of Joseph ; on the mighty deliverance from Egypt ; on the eventful wanderings in the desert ; on the heroic memories of Joshua, and Gideon, and Jephthah ; on the harp of David ; on the splendour of Solomon ; on the holiness of Hezekiah. Deprived of the very possibility of keeping the greater part of the Levitical observances, they clung with all the more desperate tenacity to those yet open to them. Though they could sit no longer under the palms of Judah, they could discourse of her, remind themselves of her glories, keep alive a deep love for her in their souls, as they took down their harps from the willows of the Euphrates to sing—not for insulting enemies, but for their own afflicted countrymen—the Lord’s song in a strange land. And amid such influences, amid the recollections too that their present sufferings were due, as they had been warned again and again by the prophets, to their past apostacies, idolatry lost for them all charm and all power to tempt. In another age, under other circumstances, the whole nation, like Aholah and Aholibah, might have doted on “the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire, all of them princes to look to ;” and might probably have desired to reproduce in their own Temple the awful and fantastic

figures of half-cherubic character,—the huge bulls and lions with calm human faces, and vast wings, and glowing hues, that stared with their motionless eyes along the dusky corridors of the palaces of Babylon. But now all these idols filled them with hate and horror, as the deities of their oppressors. Ezekiel in Babylonia, Jeremiah in Judæa, raised their voices as in strophe and antistrophe, to keep up the hopes and the faith of the nation; and Daniel, who faced the lion's den rather than give up his prayers; and the three youths who preferred the fiery furnace to any bowing to the golden image; and Mordecai, who would not bend or uncover before a descendant of the Amalekite, kindled a torch of example which they would not willingly let die. And thus it was that the prophecy of Ezekiel was fulfilled: "*I will take you from among the heathen . . . and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, . . . and ye shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*"<sup>1</sup>

3. If this had been all it would have been well; but, alas, though the good was permanent, it became in course of time terribly entangled with a rank growth of evils. The tares grew up with the wheat and choked it. When the captivity was ended, when the people were prosperously settled, when the hearts of the Jews were empty, swept, and garnished, seven other devils, some of them at least as bad as idolatry itself, began to take possession of them. Without a clear

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

conception of this degeneracy into formalism which counterbalanced the progress towards perfect monotheism, it is not too much to say that neither the life of Christ nor the origin of Christianity can be rightly understood. And it is this utter change of front, as it were, in the Jewish character, which I now propose to sketch.

4. Zerubbabel the prince and Joshua the priest led back to Judæa, not by any means the *greater* part of the descendants of the later exiles, but only a body so weak and so numerically insignificant, that they are compared by Jewish writers themselves to the mere chaff of the wheat. We may however be very sure that they were the *wheat* and not the *chaff* in moral and religious quality, whatever they may have been in material compass; and doubtless the subsequent freedom from idolatrous impulse was due, in part at least, to the fact that only the *most* pious and the *most* faithful of the Jews had willingly resigned the material comforts of Babylon for the dangers and poverty of returning exiles. But the return of Zerubbabel was in many respects a failure. Even from the prophets of the return he early disappears, and greater prominence is given to the High-priest, Joshua. When EZRA, nearly a century afterwards,<sup>1</sup> led a new colony to Jerusalem, he finds it in a condition of utter squalor and misery. To that great man, in whom the Jews recognized a second Moses, is due the reconstruction of the nation, and the entire course of its subsequent history. The days of prophets, the days of poets, the days of inspiration, the days of originality, are

<sup>1</sup> Zerubbabel, B.C. 536; Ezra, *circ.* B.C. 457.

over. His title of *SOPHER*, the Scribe, best indicates the line which he adopted. It was to elevate above all things the law of Moses; to carry out its minutest precepts; to multiply existing copies of it; to subject it to final revision; to exclude by means of it every pagan element; to turn the entire energies of the nation into a religious rather than a political direction. Ably stimulated and seconded by Nehemiah, he established that reading of Moses "in the synagogue every Sabbath day,"<sup>1</sup> which was pregnant with such memorable consequences; and with him began those measures of exclusiveness, ritual exactitude, genealogical accuracy, devoted literalism, and Sabbatical rigour, which play so immense a part in the entire subsequent history of his race.

5. The greatness of his work, the permanence which he lent to his revival of Judaism, may best be understood by comparing the state of things which we find in the time of the Maccabees with that which is recorded in the Book of Nehemiah.<sup>2</sup> The revolution of Nehemiah was about 444 B.C.; the revolt of the Maccabees about 166 B.C. In this long period of more than two and a half centuries, the Jews may be broadly said to have been pre-eminently happy, if there be any truth in the proverb that the nation is happy whose annals are uneventful. Only two great figures emerge from the gloom of general oblivion. One is the High-priest *JADDUA*, the latest traceable person chronologically whose name finds a place in Scripture,<sup>3</sup> before whom, according to the

<sup>1</sup> Neh. viii. ; Acts xv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Derenbourg *Palest.* p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Neh. xii. 11-22. (1 Chron. iii. 22-24 is a passage of dubious authenticity.)

legend—like Edwin of Deira before Paullinus, and for the same reason—Alexander the Great prostrated himself.<sup>1</sup> The other is SIMON THE JUST, who receives the splendid eulogy of the Son of Sirach.<sup>2</sup> When Ezra died his work is traditionally, but with great probability, said to have been continued by the *Keneseth haggedola*, or Great Synagogue, of which Nehemiah is the most probable founder,<sup>3</sup> and of which Simon the Just is usually accounted as the last member. If so, the apophthegm attributed to him in the Jewish fashion as the summary of his life's wisdom and experience, will shew what rich fruit Ezra's work had borne; for he said, "*The world hangs upon three things, the observance of the Law, the worship of God in the temple, and services of beneficence towards mankind.*" And when we again advance nearly a century, we find a state of things which would have delighted the Cupbearer of Artaxerxes. Whereas in *his* day it was almost impossible to induce the Jews to abstain from buying and selling on the Sabbath, in the days of Judas the Maccabee the Jews allow themselves to be tamely slaughtered rather than even lift a hand against the assaults of their enemies on the holy day.<sup>4</sup> In the days of Nehemiah the people heard with surprise that there had ever been such a thing as a Feast of Tabernacles; in the days of the Asmonæans the Law has become a household word. And not *only* the Law, but a vast and fungous growth of excrescences—all sorts of minute rules of worship and ceremony, which have grown thickly over its surface—are received with equal

<sup>1</sup> Jos. *Antiq.* xi. 8. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Neh. x. 1-11.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. i. 5, *seq.*

<sup>4</sup> I Macc. ii. 41.

reverence. The words of the Scribes are even declared to be more valid than those of the Prophets.<sup>1</sup> These Sopherim have become everything, and the Priests have become practically nothing. Their authority has become crystallized by regarding their decisions as a fixed tradition, known by the name of the Oral Law, of which even the Mishna declares that Moses received it on Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, he to the Zekanim or elders, they to the prophets, they to the men of the Great Synagogue; and the function of these, as of all subsequent Scribes and Rabbis under whatever name, is said to be, "To be circumspect in rendering justice, to form a large band of disciples, and to make a hedge about the Law."

6. The questions about which the Oral Law mainly concerns itself were five. (1) The laws of things clean and unclean, or, in other words, of ceremonial pollution—which it was the tendency to multiply indefinitely. (2) The rules for the observance of the Sabbath and other feasts, which became more and more rigorous, and therefore necessarily more and more meaningless and conventional. (3) The institution of regular and recurrent prayers and offices such as the Shema and the eighteen benedictions. (4) Rules about forbidden meats; and (5) Rules about forbidden marriages. It will be seen at a glance that the tendency of all these regulations was ceremonial and not moral, and that their one object was to make that "hedge about the Law," which was regarded as the highest duty of the Sopherim, and of the Tanaim who succeeded them. Of the sort of questions which

<sup>1</sup> Derenbourg Palest. p. 32.



arose, a favourable specimen—favourable because not so pedantically minute and remote from all the serious concerns of life as many of these cases of casuistry were—may be found in Haggai ii. 12, 13.

7. The necessity, real or supposed, for these observances (I say real or supposed, because one ultimate intention of this system was patriotic, however narrow the species of patriotism, and however mistaken the methods which it adopted), became increasingly prominent from the days when the conquests of Alexander reduced Judæa to the practical position of a Greek province. For long years it was a bone of contention between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucidæ of Syria; and whichever happened to have the upper hand, the influences of Greek civilization were equally predominant. Those influences were not *idolatrous*, for the Greeks believed so little in their own mythology, as to be supremely indifferent to anything remotely resembling proselytism; but they were the deadly fascination of effeminate refinement and moral corruption. The fashion, afterwards so universal, of adopting a Greek as well as a Jewish name, was only one indication of the strong Hellenic current which began at this time to flow into Jewish life. Even 200 B.C. Antigonus of Socho, teacher of the Zadok, to whom by erroneous tradition is assigned the origin of the Sadducees, bears a Greek name. Twenty-five years later the wicked and apostate priests, Jason and Menelas—Greek names which they adopted in lieu of their true names, Jesus and Onias—deliberately tried to seduce the Jews into the gymnastic sports of the Greeks, and even to obliterate the marks of cir-

cumcision. The Jewish sense of this new form of national degeneracy is indicated by the Talmudic legends, that whereas in the time of Simon the Just the right hand always seized the lot of the "goat for Jehovah" on the day of Atonement, after him it was sometimes the right hand, sometimes the left; that whereas the scarlet tongue tied round the neck of the "scape-goat for Azazel" always became white, afterwards it sometimes remained red; that in his time the lamp at the west of the temple always burned continuously, after him it sometimes went out; and so forth.<sup>1</sup> And this at least is clear that he was the last high-priest who won universal esteem; that after his time, and the degeneracy of the later Maccabees, the priesthood lost much of its sanctity in the eyes of the people; and that because of the lax, Sadducean, unnational tendencies of those who held it, the reverence which it had once commanded was transferred to the teachers who devoted themselves to the rigid observance and indefinite extension of the ceremonial Law.

8. The open degeneracy of the priesthood under the successors of Simon the Just strengthened the determination of those who were not prepared to abandon their national customs. The heroic revolt of the Maccabees against the kings of Syria shewed the force of this patriotic resolve. The party of opposition to Grecising innovation was first known by the name of the *Chasîdîm*, or "pious;" but it is only in the days of the second generation of Asmonæans—in the reign of John Hyrcanus, son of Simon—that we find the traces of positive *Phar-*

<sup>1</sup> Derenbourg *Palest.* pp. 45-51.

*isaism.* In the endeavour to secure the absolute isolation of Israel, and therefore its safety from the fresh danger of infection from subtle Hellenic taint, the ΖΟΥΓΌΤΗ, or Couples—the name given to “the double line of sages at the head of the Jewish schools,” who now began to win the honour which had hitherto been accorded to the priests—had early worked at the task of thickening their hedge round the Law; and one of the earliest Couples, Joseph ben Joezer and Joseph ben Johanan, had declared glass vessels and the soil of Gentile lands unclean, preventing by the first of these decisions all social intercourse with Gentiles in Palestine, and by the second all emigration from it. This legalized and intentional unsociability was called in Greek ἀμιξία, and in Syriac *Perishooth*, and it is the origin of the famous name of Pharisee, or “Separatist.” This party adopted their distinctive rules, and built up their traditional system, originally for a special purpose; and, as is so often the case in history, the *system* continued long after all *necessity* for it had passed away.

9. Opposition is always evoked by the falsehood of extremes, and it was natural that the pedantries and extravagances of Pharisaism should give definiteness to the views of another party, which was content with a conscientious obedience to the actual written law, and rejected the inverted pyramid of inferences which widened upwards from the narrow apex of words and letters. This party chose *Tsedâkah*, or “righteousness,” as their watchword: it consisted chiefly of priests, and thus identified itself with Simeon Hats-tsadik, the last pious priest. And

thus sprang into life the two terms Pharisee and Sadducee; originally, perhaps, like Whig and Tory, applied by way of nickname from without, rather than adopted from within. The latter sect should strictly have been called *Tsaddîkîm*, but the form *Tsaddûkîm* seems to be a mere paronomasia to form an effective contrast to the form *Perûshîm*.

10. Each party might have urged some consideration in favour of its own line of conduct; each party had reasonable arguments in favour of its own theories. If, in the necessary divergence of human opinions, men would but be contented to work together while they differ; if they would not be so passionately anxious to pluck the motes out of their brethren's eye, instead of attending to the beams in their own; if they would not love their *party* better than their Church, and their *Church* better than the truth, and *themselves* best of all;—if, in one word, they would cultivate among themselves that divine spirit of charity which, instead of the microscopic magnification of infinitesimal differences, turns the eyes to the telescopic range of points of unity,—the common work of the Church might then gain rather than lose by the emulous yet friendly zeal of those who amid minor divergences yet kept the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But such, alas! has never been the history of parties; and it was not long before the mutual jealousies of Pharisee and Sadducee burst into a blaze, while the resultant explosion drove the two sects apart in irreconcilable opposition and active antagonism. The rupture took place at a banquet towards the close of the reign of John Hyrcanus, B.C. 109. He was a good

Pharisee and an able ruler, and thinking that he had deserved gratitude for his vigour and conscientiousness, he tried the dangerous experiment of asking his guests if they had any fault to find with him or his administration. The guests of both factions united in praising his blameless virtue, when up rose one of those narrow, bitter, bigoted fanatics who are always the curse of their day—his name was Eleazar—and, repeating an old exploded calumny, told John that he ought to resign the high-priesthood because his mother had once been the captive, and therefore possibly the concubine, of Antiochus Epiphanes; and therefore he *might* not be a descendant of Aaron. If we can imagine an Archbishop of Canterbury, at the end of a noble and virtuous career, taunted at his own table by some blatant bigot with the senseless fable of Archbishop Parker and the Nag's Head consecration, we may form some faint conception of the brutality and inopportuneness of the taunt. A Sadducee who was present, named Jonathan, seized his opportunity,—tried to persuade John that Eleazar was only the mouthpiece of the secret feelings of his party,—and said that he would find it to be so if he asked them of what punishment Eleazar was worthy. The Pharisees, always mild in their punishments, proposed what Hyrcanus considered to be inadequate, and in consequence he abandoned their party and tried to thwart their views. But the people as a body loved the yoke laid upon them by the Pharisees, and from this date the Asmonæan princes began to lose much of their popularity.

II. In the reign of his son Alex. Jannaeus the

quarrel raged yet more fiercely. At the Feast of Tabernacles there had sprung up a purely traditional custom of pouring on the altar a libation of water drawn from the fountain of Siloam. In ostentatious contempt for the Pharisees, Alexander, on one occasion, omitted this traditional custom. The Pharisees and the people, indignant at the alteration of their ritual, began to pelt him with the citrons which formed part of the *lulabim* which they carried in their hands (Lev. xxiii. 40); and he in a paroxysm of fury ordered his guards to fall upon them, so that six thousand were slaughtered in the ensuing massacre. On his death-bed, however, Jannæus began to see that he had committed a political mistake, which had embittered his life; and lost him the affection of his people. Accordingly, on his death-bed, he summoned to his side his wife Salome, and said to her, "Fear neither Pharisees, nor those who are not Pharisees, but fear *painted* or *varnished* Pharisees, who do the deeds of Zimri, but claim the reward of Phinehas." Salome, accordingly, not only reconciled herself to the Pharisees, but gave her entire influence to their leader, the stern and narrow Simeon ben Shetach. And so predominant was the influence of the party, that on one occasion, when one of the princely and priestly Asmonæans was leaving the Temple, followed by the multitude, they suddenly caught sight of Shemaiah and Abtalion, the "couple" of the day, and instantly leaving the high-priest, they thronged to escort the Rabbis. "Hail to the sons of the people!" said the mortified high-priest to them in a tone of sarcasm. "Hail," they replied, "to the sons of the people who do the deeds of Aaron,

and no greeting to the son of Aaron who acts not as Aaron did."

12. From this sketch of the growth of religious opinion, and, side by side with it, of religious party faction among the Jews, we shall be in a position to understand clearly the relations of Judaism to Christianity, and the nature of the deadly struggle which took place between them. For in the days of our blessed Lord the Jews were mainly represented by these two parties—the action and position of the Essenes, though subsequently important, being at that date so entirely insignificant, that we may defer all allusion to them to a later period.

13. But such being the state of Jewish opinion in the days of Christ, it is hardly strange that the antagonism between Judaism, as represented by its two leading sects, began with the very beginning of our Lord's ministry; nay, even with the ministry of our Lord's forerunner. When among those who thronged to his baptism John saw some of the Pharisees also, we are not told that he gave them any special directions, as he did to the soldiers, the tax-gatherers, and the people, but he simply expresses his frank and contemptuous amazement at their presence, and denounces them at once as serpents sprung from serpents, vipers of a viperous brood. Nor did their coming mean much more than curiosity, or even espionage. They did not repent, as he bade them. They were not baptized of him. They rejected the counsel of God against themselves. To the question of Jesus, they professed inability to decide whether He were prophet or a *Mesith* (Seducer); but among themselves they said quite frankly, "He hath a devil."

14. And very early indeed in the ministry of Christ did his antagonism with them begin, and assume marked proportions. That antagonism arose from various causes.

1. It was originally rooted in the contempt in which they trained and encouraged themselves—a contempt born of that ignorance which is at once a cause and consequence of boundless self-conceit—against those whom they called *Amharatsim*, “people of the earth,” and unlearned. That anything so shallow and hollow as their Oral Law—mere masses of cobwebs spun out of their own bowels—should pass for learning, would be amazing to us if we did not find the same phenomenon in scholasticism and classical editing. But at any rate they *did* look down with sovereign scorn on any one—particularly if he had the presumption to teach others—who had never passed through, or had anything to do with, their own Rabbinic schools. To their credit be it spoken that they had no contempt for mere humility of birth. They held that all honest “work honours the workman,” and even their great Hillel had been a porter, who earned by hard labour what he expended in evening instruction. But being fatally ignorant of the differences between wisdom and learning, they imagined that the *Am-ha-arctis* could never be learned (Ecclus. xxxviii. 25), because he would never have leisure, and therefore that “his talk” could only be “of bullocks.” This was the beginning of that angry and contemptuous tone which they adopted towards Christ;—“Is not this the carpenter?” “Whence hath this man letters, having never learned?”



II. But this dislike was profoundly increased by Christ's entire *method* of teaching. Their own method was simply that of cases, precedents, decisions, reports, authorities. Rabbi So-and-so decided so and so on the authority of So-and-so, who again had had it from So-and-so. Not only was there no originality in it, but originality, unless it assumed the form of some specially outrageous expansion of existing and recognized canons of artificial commentary on Scripture, was regarded as in itself suspicious and heretical. That Jesus taught *with authority*, at once made his teaching wholly unlike that of the Scribes, and made the Scribes his warm opponents.

III. The virulence of the opposition rose, however, mainly from the fact that our Lord unsparingly laid the axe at the very root of that Oral Law which had reduced their entire religion to a cerement of formalism, painted and gilded with utter hypocrisy, but which was the very idol and centre of their entire system. If we had to select one utterance which, more than another, pledged the leading Jews of our Lord's day to irreconcilable hostility against Him, it would be the passage in which, with the *completest* defiance of all that they regarded as most characteristic and venerable in the customs of their nation, He charged them with setting at nought by their traditions the very Law round which, as the most sacred object of their lives, they professed it to be their duty to "make a hedge."

Now as the Pharisees have found not a few champions among recent critics, and as some have gone so far as to make it a direct charge against the

character of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He used against them language of such unsparing denunciation, I shall endeavour clearly to prove in a following paper the complete worthlessness, the radical baseness of their entire system ; and therefore that, if the Jews were to be saved from that formalism which had so dangerously replaced the old pre-Babylonian idolatry, it was absolutely necessary for Christ to "utterly abolish" these idols—Idola of the Forum, the Theatre, and the Cave—which had usurped the once-more desecrated shrines of heart-religion.

F. W. FARRAR.

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A CHAPTER OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

2.—THE JUDGMENT OF JESUS ON JOHN. (*St. Matt. xi. 7-15.*)

THE central point of the judgment pronounced by our Lord upon John after the departure of the messengers is to be found in the words, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist : notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (*Verse 11*). It is a remarkable declaration, which has always been more or less a puzzle to interpreters. The statement seems to contradict itself, in making John at once the greatest and the least of men. It seems, further, to give too unfavourable a view of the spiritual condition of a godly man, by virtually excluding him from the kingdom of heaven ; for if even the least in the kingdom be greater than he, it would seem to follow that he is not in it at all. Some ancient interpreters, including Chrysostom, evaded the difficulty by making the words contain a