

Hebrews; hence yet another influence in the local culture probably made for parallelism of a very decided form, whether accompanied (as in Arabic poetry) with rime or not.

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JESUS AND THE 'PHARISEES'.

ACCORDING to Josephus, at least on a superficial reading, the Jews about the time of Christ were divided into three parties, the Essenes who lived an ascetical life outside the town, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees. The Pharisees were noteworthy for their extreme legalism, but they also believed in extra-Mosaic traditions and in the Resurrection, and they expected the Messiah. With this seems to agree the remarks made about them by the Evangelists, especially St Luke, who expressly asserts the Pharisees to be that party of the Jews which believed in Resurrection (Acts xxiii 8). It is true that Luke is thought by some to have got part of his information from Josephus, but it might seem hypercriticism to reject his testimony on that ground.

Thus it has come to be accepted as a self-evident thing that the appropriate name for the religiously minded, law-abiding Jew of the 1st century A. D. is Pharisee, and it is more or less assumed that they were a majority of the nation, or at least a definite and coherent party. There were a few eccentric ascetics; also a priestly class or clique, for whom the proper name was Sadducees; there were some worldly Jews who were called Herodians, or perhaps 'people of the Land'. But the mass of the nation were properly named 'Pharisees'. The party of the pious, law-abiding Jews are called *Hasids* or 'Assidaean' in the Book of Maccabees; in Talmudic literature, on the other hand, the term generally used is *Ḥabērim*, i. e. 'Comrades', who are distinguished from the irreligious 'people of the land' by their strictness and adherence to the laws of Levitical purity. It has become generally accepted that in essentials 'Assidaean' = 'Pharisee' = *Ḥabēr*, the only difference being that the first term belongs to Maccabaeans, the last to Talmudic times, while Pharisee is the appropriate word for the same sort of people in the Gospel era.

We can learn a good deal about the *Ḥaber* from the Talmud, and (starting from the equation Pharisee = *Ḥaber* = good Jew) a good deal has been lately written on the subject of the 'Pharisees', from which we may learn their virtues and the sympathy with which we ought to regard them. They were often poor, were generally unworldly; they were pious in the good sense, they loved God, their Father in heaven, and were as a body animated with the feelings that inspired the 119th

Psalm. How tragic, therefore, and how difficult to explain, that these pious circles called forth the hardest words spoken by Jesus Christ! Are we to say that Rabbinic piety is false piety, or are the Gospels seriously unfair? Roughly speaking, the first alternative is adopted by most learned German theologians, of whom perhaps Schürer is the type: the latter alternative is that made familiar to us by Dr Büchler and to a certain extent by Dr C. G. Montefiore. The object of these pages is to suggest a less radical solution.

When we turn to the Talmud to find the vernacular word, of which *φαρισαῖος*, Pharisee, is an adaptation, it meets us at once. It is in Aramaic *pērīsh* (pl. *pērīshīn*), in Hebrew *pārūsh* (pl. *pērūshīm*). The word means 'separated', or 'distinguished', both in a bad and a good sense. It is, in fact, actually used for dissident or dissenter, one who rejects the received interpretation of an ordinance.¹ Elsewhere the 'Pharisee' of the Talmud is one who is particular in religion, and is found, as 'particular' people usually are, to be tiresome in actual life. The phrase 'plagues of the Pharisees', which occurs in the Mishna, is explained to mean that there are seven kinds of Pharisees, all bad (b. Sota 22 b) or all bad except two (j. Berach. ix 5). We need not therefore be surprised to find denunciations of Pharisees in the Gospel, or to find Pharisees described as 'hypocrites', more especially if 'woe to you Pharisees who . . .' is taken to mean 'woe to that kind of Pharisee who does such-and-such a bad practice', and not (as too often supposed) 'woe to the party of the Pharisees, for they all do such-and-such a bad practice'. To denounce people for being 'particular' in religion is one thing, to denounce 'particular' people for nevertheless doing bad practices is another. Such courses at least suggest that the persons in question are inconsistent, if not insincere; it is not far from *ὑπόκρισις*, whether we translate this by 'hypocrisy' or (with the Syriac Versions) by 'capriciousness'.²

In dealing with all Talmudic evidence brought forward in illustration of the Gospels I feel it most important to emphasize the fundamental difference in the quality of the two kinds of evidence. The object of both sets of documents is edification, not the satisfaction of historical curiosity. The Evangelists are concerned that their readers may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Talmudist is concerned with what is right conduct for his co-religionists: neither is directly concerned with the history of religion among the Jews. But there is this difference, that the Evangelists are uniquely concerned with the Jewish people and their religion as these were about A. D. 30. What was alive and flourishing in

¹ Pesach. 70 b.

² *كاذب*, the standing rendering for *ὑποκριτής*, seems an idiomatic expression for 'capricious' rather than 'subservient' (see Gal. ii 6).

Jewish religion is what matters to the Evangelists and to the modern scholar who studies their work, equally whether it remained in the religion of the Jews after the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 or whether, like so much else, it then perished altogether. The Talmudist, on the other hand, has no antiquarian interests, properly so called. He has less idea of 'evolution' (by which, in this connexion we generally mean what is more accurately called 'epigenesis'¹) than the Christian, who at least has taken to himself the conception of a new event in the Divine economy, so that things under the New Dispensation are in some measure really different from what they were under the Old. To the Talmudist what is right now has always been right. The Law was always there, even in Patriarchal times, and so were its obligations. It would have been difficult, I think, for a Talmudic writer to think that one who was zealous for the Law in past days had been zealous in a wrong way.

Further, and this is the important thing, vast and varied as the Talmudic literature is, it all goes back to Johanan ben Zakkai and his School. Johanan ben Zakkai was a loyal and orthodox Jew, and he may be described as a 'Pharisee', but he did not represent in himself all the tendencies of the not-unorthodox Judaism of the 1st century. The fact that he himself belonged to the peace party in A. D. 70 is enough to shew that his religion was something different from that of the average Jew of his day. No doubt he was a most learned Doctor and a faithful transmitter of tradition, and no doubt also it was his teaching that was suitable for the profoundly altered state of things that the religious Jew had for the future to endure; but, if our aim is to reconstruct the religious life of Palestine as it was in A. D. 30, in all its variegated diversity, the sound doctrines of Johanan ben Zakkai are not enough. If we want to draw a true picture of the Church of England in Wesley's day, it is not enough to study the works of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, even though we may be convinced that High Church principles had never ceased to be maintained by a succession of faithful men, and that the quotations of their opinions in the writings of the leaders of the Oxford Movement are accurate.

Moreover, there is also to be taken into consideration the whole series of facts treated in Leszynsky's *Sadduzäer*.² This remarkable book seems to have attracted less attention, at least in England, than it deserves. Leszynsky shews that the Sadducees, whatever they may have ultimately become, had been a religious party, not a worldly or aristocratic clique. In the times of Hellenization, before the Macca-baeans rising, the faithful Jews were united in refusing to abandon

¹ See the enlightening Note in Tyrrell's *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, p. 18.

² R. Leszynsky *Die Sadduzäer* (Berlin, 1912).

their ancestral religion for new Greek ways of life; but what, in detail, was the ancestral religion of the Jews? Was it the mass of customs actually practised, or was it what was commanded in the Pentateuch, no more and no less? The Sadducees were originally those who held the latter alternative, whereas the mass of the 'pious' were not so much contending for the Pentateuch itself as for the praxis—fairly well codified, it is true, in the Pentateuch—to which they had been immemorially accustomed. An attitude of mere conservatism is fatal in the end to any party, and ingenious men after a time were found who managed always to find a 'support' in the words of the written Law for the custom or doctrine they advocated. According to Leszynsky these interpreters were the original 'Pharisees'. The fall of the Maccabean Dynasty ruined the Sadducees as a religious force in Judaism: their ideal had been the Priest-King, while the Pharisees (as we see particularly from the Psalms of Solomon) hoped for a new David, who would not be a priest at all.

Of the surviving literature, Leszynsky assigns Schechter's 'Zadokite Fragment', the Book of Jubilees, the original Testaments of the XII Patriarchs, and (with some hesitation) the Assumption of Moses, to Sadducee writers.

What is important to notice here is the considerable amount of 'Sadducee' teaching that Leszynsky finds in the Gospels, or rather in the recorded teaching of Jesus. 'As a matter of fact, Jesus in His attitude to the Law is a Sadducee' (p. 284). What Leszynsky means is of course illustrated by Mk. vii 8 ('leaving the commandment of God ye hold to the tradition of men'), but he means more than that.¹ He considers that the interpretation of the Evangelist according to which the saying of Jesus in vii 18, 19^a, is meant to declare that all foods are clean is not really correct, and that Jesus was not thinking of the lawfulness of non-Mosaic foods like pork or rabbit, but of the question whether in eating lawful food ablutions were a religious duty. He thought not²: Rabbinic authorities of a later day were of a contrary opinion (Hagiga ii 5; Sota 4 b). What the Gospels tell us is that some 'Pharisees' and 'scribes from Jerusalem' held already in the 1st century the same views as the Rabbis of a hundred years later.

Dr Büchler in his *Galiläische Am ha-Ares* (pp. 126 ff) is concerned to demonstrate against Schürer that the greater part of the washings prescribed in the Talmud in respect to eating food relate to *Teruma*, the tithe set apart for priests to eat, and that it was only at a much later date than the 1st century that hand-washing before ordinary meals is prescribed as a duty. This may be so, and as a reply to Schürer, whom

¹ Among other passages Leszynsky adduces Mk. xii 35-37.

² That this was so is further attested by Lk. xi 38.

Büchler feels to be unfairly describing the religion of Jews as a painful service hemmed in with ridiculous tabus, it is effective. But does it really elucidate the Gospel tales? I do not think that social customs become a religious duty before they are generally practised. A custom is first observed by 'particular' people, then (if it becomes general) it is justified by authority or reason, and at last it is commanded. What the Gospel tales (Mk. vii, Lk. xi) shew us is that the up-to-date, professionally religious 'particular' people among the Jews about A.D. 30 were observing rules of behaviour which were not codified till much later. No doubt it was a pious and seemingly act to sprinkle or dip the hands before meals, no doubt the 'particular' persons who always practised this bit of ritual affected to speak of hands that had not been so washed by the same adjective that was used for levitical impurity, but Jesus in the Gospel refuses to regard this act as a religious duty, well knowing (among other things) that no text out of the Pentateuch can be found to prescribe it.

Mark does indeed go beyond the facts when he says (vii 3) that not only Pharisees but 'all the Jews' do not eat without washing. Further, *πυγμαῖ* in vii 3 must be wrong, whether or no the alternative *πικνύ* be right. But general statements about the religious practices of outsiders cannot be pressed: the whole parenthesis (*vs.* 3, 4) means little more than 'Jews are very particular about washings and what they call cleanliness in food'—which is true.

There is more difficulty, as Leszynsky says (p. 291), in explaining from a Jewish point of view the story of the Disciples and the Ears of Corn (Mk. ii 23-28 and parallels). But I wonder whether about A. D. 30 it was quite certain to the law-abiding Jew that the act of the Disciples was definitely unlawful. Is plucking a fruit an act of harvesting? Does it not rather come under the head of 'that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you'? The ears of corn plucked by the Disciples were not prepared, not carried away out or in to their house or a barn, the act did not 'belong to the labour of the children of men' (Jubilees 1 10), except by what we should now call a 'rabbinical' interpretation.¹

But there remains the great distinction between the Judaism of the Mishna and the Judaism indicated in the Gospels that the former is codified while the latter is still to some extent in solution; and further, that the codification is that made by the one surviving school of thought and practice, while the Gospels give us glimpses of a state of things in which not all good Jews were 'particular' about some things in which Johanan ben Zakkai was particular, and some Jews who were 'par-

¹ Elisha b. Abuyah the Apostate Doctor pulled up a radish on the Sabbath, but he handed it on to another person (Ḥag. 15a).

particular' were strict about some things in which later Jews were laxer. It all comes to this, that the 'Pharisees' of the Gospel were extra-zealous for the Law, but their practices are not to be identified *en bloc* with Jewish orthodoxy of Talmudic times.

No doubt this is not all. To the end, as I believe, Jesus continued to regard Himself as faithful to the Law of God, as one who 'fulfilled the Law', but there was a real difference between the piety of Jesus and the piety of the 'Pharisee'. It is not easy to express this difference, if one wants to be just to the Rabbinical Religion at its best. Perhaps it may be expressed by saying that in naming the Law of God, the Rabbis put the emphasis on 'the Law' but Jesus on 'God'. As Dr Montefiore puts it, the Rabbis said: 'If your father bids you transgress the Law, do not obey him. The enactments by which [the Rabbis] developed the written Law were not a benefit to themselves; they were honestly intended as a fence and an honour to the Law. It is all very well to speak of 'legal casuistry', or of 'restraints of the Law' *versus* 'human need and human rights'. But should not God go before man? The Law was perfect, immutable, divine. God must know best; His commands must be perfect, must be divine.'¹ Jesus starts with much the same language: indeed the righteousness of His disciples is to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. But He felt He knew the mind of His Father in heaven directly. So He felt sure of being right when He treated permission to divorce as a mere concession to the uncircumcized hearts² of His countrymen, and pointed back to a more ideal state 'in the beginning'. He felt sure He was right to treat the laxity of the disciples in plucking the corn on the Sabbath as unblameworthy, and to defend them for not keeping certain customary Fasts. He felt sure He had authority to interfere with the traffic in the Temple courts. He felt sure He could declare that the humble Tax-gatherer was justified before God rather than the blameless Pharisee.

The people in the Synagogue on that first Sabbath were right. 'What is this?' they said: διδαχὴ καινὴ κατ' ἐξουσίαν, 'new teaching by authority!' That is just the question. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is just whether Jesus had, or had not, authority to trust what in others we should call personal instinct. Those of His contemporaries who were 'particular' in their religious behaviour and their loyalty to the Law must have felt this difference of attitude, before any actual word or deed made the matter demonstrable.

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¹ *Synopt. Gosp.* (2nd ed.), i 55.

² Mk. x 5: the phrase goes back to Deut. x 16.