

THE Ecclesiastical Review

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HISTORICAL.

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THE Ecclesiastical Review

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A MODERN DEFENCE OF THE PHARISEES.

THE PHARISEES are pictured in the Gospels in colors that are very hard to erase. They live in the imagination of Christians as "whited sepulchres," as covetous, envious, ostentatious hypocrites. But the Pharisees of the Gospels, we are now being told, are only the straw-men of early Christian propaganda. The Pharisees of history, as they are revealed in their literature, were honorable men, the worthy representatives of a form of religion different, indeed, from Christianity, but not necessarily inferior to it.

The purpose of this essay is to give a fair exposition of what has been written recently in favor of this Jewish sect, and then to examine the weaknesses from which the plea of the defence seems to suffer.

I must preface the exposition by a few words explaining the mentality of the Pharisees." As far back as we can trace

Travers Herford, *Pharisees* (London, 1932; reëdited as *The Pharisees*, 1934) and *Immu in lbs NT. T. Period* (London, 19-?) and among modern Jenseb. I. Abrahams, *Pharisees and the Gospels*. First and Second Series (Cambridge University, 1917 and 1924) and of the many writings of G. L. G. especially his *Synoptic Gospels* (London, 1917, 2 vols.) and *Ulerstn and Gospel Teachings* (London, 1930). More recently have *QbrütatiŪyz* Volume One, *T& Age of Transition*, and Two, *Tiw Cdoewief Pharisaism nith Other Cultures* (London, 1937). Velumes Herbert Loewe has contributed an essay in defence of the Pharisees in *Jesus of Nazareth* (English trans, by Danby. 1926) and an essay "The Pharisees and Their Teachings" (in the Hebrew Union Annual, Cincinnati, 1929) can be added to the list of recent *apologias*. *Pharisees and Rabbinical Anthology* (London. ISIS) has the same

..... -- *Pharn.iim*, esp. c. 2 "The Theory of the Tora'i" *M-i* 'afrar.ce, *w Jaiisme Avant Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 19313 pp. Sift272ff., 434«; and G. F. *in ts,- First Centuries of tie Chr sian i ra: Ū.-v A# or T.* bridge, Mmj, Vols. I-II, 1927. Vol. UI. >93v), 1, pp- 56-71 and 2«β.

the sect, they appear as zealous upholders of the Jewish law.

law" is what the Jews called in Hebrew the *Τοπώ*. Torah simply means "teaching." It was the name given by the Jews to the teaching *par excellence*, that is, the divine revelation touchsafed to them through Mos--.

In fact, they came gradually to call the whole of God's r<->elation as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old Testament by tr.k name, *Torah*.

The Pharisees took a vers- different view of Torah from the Sacduces. The Sadducees were the h.gh-priestly sect, and t>

'j ' 2V Ji"ryccs: wnetiK-r th.y were laymen or simple priests, ti.i. ...mmacaj iKo the oral traditions of the Scribes. The A""? (S"?rT---'Ç 'A'l..' interpreted the written γ.,' , Λ, It'' Λ-'P;,'<l and 'ppi>:,< it io changing conditions. <v ' ') . u.,i ... ,j r;-v. - t. v.l. ti) deduce from the

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Pharisees cannot be blamed if in the disputes over healing and plucking corn on the sabbath, over the permissibility of divorce, and over ritualistic ablutions and purifications, they upheld their traditional understanding of their religion. Jesus in reality pitched His superlative personality against the received interpretation of the Jewish religion: therein lay the irreconcilable opposition between Him and His adversaries. Christianity is a religion founded on devotion to a Person, Christ; Judaism, and especially Pharisaism, is a religion founded on devotion to an idea, the Torah?

Thus is emphasized the opposition between our Lord and the Pharisees. But in defence of the Pharisees it can also be said toa: they and Jesus occupied much common ground? The originality of Jesus, we are told, has been exaggerated. Pharisaism was itself, independently of Jesus, a religion of joy: the sabbath was a joyous family festival and the joy at the pilgrimages was phenomenal. Pharisaism was a religion of mercy, for had it not mitigated the harsh penal code of the Sadducees? Th Pharisees enjoined friendly relations with Gentiles. They tighr respect for human personality and safeguarded the rights of women and even of slaves. They taught the transcendence sec ill-presence of God, His divine mercy, His Fatherhood. Against the Sadducees they taught belief in a future life and to the resurrection of the just. In a word, a Pharisee listening to the Sermon on the Mount was simply right at home.

^T.at is more characteristic of Christian piety than the phrase "Our rather who art in heaven"? Yet Isaias centuries before -nd prayed, " Thou, O Lord art our Father " (63:16), and in toa oral tradition of the rabbis at the end of the first century ■it our era we find the loving prayer: " Who is there on. whom to lean, except Our Father who is in heaven? " * Or again, vhit is so tender as our Lord's phrase, " Are not two sparrows told for a farthing, and not one of them shall fall on the toaand without your Father" (Mt. 10:29)? Tet the rabbis z similar saying: " A bird perishes not without Heaven".5

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 ' ũ-α g pp 261-2.

We may say at once that: as Catholics we find nothing strange in these similarities. To us it seems only natural that our D^xvm Lord in His public teaching should have used many p r which He had heard from childhood in the synagogue, ^h t-cver we may claim for the teaching of Jesus, we do not e. P generate -ts i i-rbaⁱ originality of expression.

But we must hasten on to a third aspect of t. e e ε)ε the Pharisees. How do these apologists deal with the evid of the New Testinwnt? Surely the testimony of t. e. ° Gospels, especially the Sermon on the Mount and the exconau. ^ of the Pharisees at the hands of our Tord as recor e twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew, cannot be ma e to r w-.th the contention that Pharisaism, in teaching an *in P t.ce. was in die time of our Lord not far from oein^ 8 pure and undefined Listen to the lied-· reply of Mr. Lo-Reader in Rabbinics. Queen's College, Camm>dge. held him \i- e. our Lord; responsible for Matthew twentv-t.. _ it seems t-> me most natural t.i rv-card the chapter as η·1->“(ally altered by later hands. The obiectic-n to it » denunciation-·, but the fact that the dcnuncut.or.s are wiio*-·'l·. Vhat ó the K'cr elemi.nt.' · , .. -'sir.

Others, like Mr. Herford and rhe kit· L>r. the *'unehar.tabhncS' ” of Jesus toward btis r.*. e I · I · :·"l: <d Vis human imperfection, both of knuv j.l.' Uifr, Me 'l.as i man it bay. and it w:is only na.*. · H-n i li. bn , m ··. M. Pad. -·>: ·■ stle aft·.' h s enr-verstot: trom χ· i- isi'·-tii ·■ - · ■■ - ·- i iimr't: ! p-tr.ta» _·'μ λ 'O'!^ "I'h·?, iri.r.tii - 1r i'i' N -h-m," w-il.' My H-t "·■ · · · r. ■ ;·t · ^ ---a · tt · << ' ·'·■ v'

Hi.it are we to reply to “bise attev/ts ‘o · · · η, t-sj nve ···ηηoi. ill· w ·-ny firce :n rh:ir ksi:: ' of ..our* · ne nc.-iminating passages ui the N.. · /3. ;i ur.s rhe hr-* Gospr? retain th

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twenty-third chapter with the seven "woes" pronounced upon the Scribes and Pharisees. There is not a scrap of textual evidence against it. Moreover, the substance of Matthew twenty-three is found in Luke eleven (vv. 37-50) and twenty (vv. 45-47), and is of a piece with the threads of conflict between our Lord and His enemies running through the four Gospels.

If we are to meet these apologists on purely historical ground, we cannot invoke as arguments the divinity of our Lord or the inspiration of the New Testament documents. No, we must examine their assertions and assumptions to discover wherein lie the historical weaknesses of their apologetic.

First of all, is it right to assume that our Lord's condemnation of the Pharisees was *wholesale*? It seems not. Nicodemus, attested by St. John as a Pharisee,¹⁰ was certainly a good man. Gamaliel, likewise described as a Pharisee,¹¹ appears as a fair-minded seeker after truth. We have no grounds for ascribing to anyone the Pharisee, with whom our Lord dined,¹² the whole catalogue of vices of our Lord's denunciation. We know from Mark's narrative that our Lord praised the inquiring Scribe to whom He said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Lk. 12:34), and yet that Scribe, according to Matthew's account was of the Pharisee party. So much for individuals whom we can be certain.

Indeed, it is evident from the Gospels that there was dissension among the Pharisees themselves over the claims made by Jesus. Some of that sect were quite frankly impressed by His teachings, and said so; others were not.¹³ Again after our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension a number of Pharisees became Christians, some of whom (we may add) by their Judaizing were necessary to the Council of Jerusalem.¹⁴ The Pharisees were essentially a large, heterogeneous party.

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It is worth noting that the Pharisees were not all enemies of our Lord. Some were quite frankly impressed by His teachings, and said so; others were not.¹³ Again after our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension a number of Pharisees became Christians, some of whom (we may add) by their Judaizing were necessary to the Council of Jerusalem.¹⁴ The Pharisees were essentially a large, heterogeneous party.

Finally, would St. Paul after his conversion have boasted about his Pharisee upbringing if *all* Pharisees of that time had been as contemptible as those our Lord condemned? Three times the Apostle refers explicitly to his status as a Pharisee." Elsew.ere he again claims consideration because of the religious instruction he had received in Judaism; ia and quite rightly, for it wa, the best h>s country and his reigi'on bad :-> give, 'ie must recall that when St. Paul was held capti-;', it st-. 'I sect " of the Pharisees who were unwillng to condemn h l';; i hinxif never chtracterved Pharisaim as a wivi; ' i.h the 'ti cr.'i (f hypoer.-y.

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regard to hypocrisy, we learn from rabbinic sources that, ten parts of hypocrisy in the world, nine are in Jeru-
 —And again, " the plague of Pharisees," a form of acrisy—" is one of the four causes of the ruin of the Id".² Finally, we are told that there are seven kinds of rises:² "The' Shoulder Pharisee? who bears his good deeds his shoulder; the 'Wait a Little Pharisee,' who says, ' wait I do my good deed;' the 'Bruised Pharisee,' who has hurt himself against a wall, to avoid looking at a woman; the ' Pestle msee,' with his head down in mock humility; the ' Reckoning urisc,' who casts up his account of sins and virtues; the 'Scd-fearing Pharisee,' i. e. Job; the ' God-loving Pharisee,' e. Abraham."

These admissions regarding hypocrisy and ostentation come from rather late sources, and we need not overemphasize them. Let so do many passages brought forward in praise of Pharisees come from late sources. Moreover, these admissions confirm the antecedent likelihood of hypocrisy in a religion which laid so much stress on keeping clean the outside of the cup, and made righteousness consist more in measurable justice than in immeasurable love.²⁴ The very circumstance of our being able to find such admissions in rabbinic literature at all is not a little to bear out the truth of the Gospel picture of Pharisees of Galilee and Judea in the time of our Lord; and shows again how unjustifiable it is to assume that rabbinic Pharisees and the New Testament documents are wholly at odds. **Way** they delineate the character of Pharisees.

Let, then, denunciation of the Pharisees cut the ground away under both the Pharisees of His own day and their modern representatives. The sect had without warrant bound up with

" Xo. 17 on i. 5, cited by Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
 h *. See J. Borstveit, S.J. *Er fodaisme* PAsffaiew << T«mfs de Jrsw-
 ii-irU r-j'. 2 vMs) I, p. 5J; and Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
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the human as well as the divine—as if it were all equally Torah, divine teaching. By so doing they had riveted attention on human prescriptions, i. e. on *externals*, to the neglect of the "weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy and faith", This attitude of mind, which Mr. Herford asks us to understand and admire, our Divine Lord roundly censured. "You make void the commandment of God," He tells them/" that you may keep your own tradition." That is why He protested against the wild overgrowth of Phari-aie legislation: "Every plant which ir.y heavenly father hath not planted shall be n-Kcd up.' ' That is why in such matters as their endless purifications and ablutions and sabbath regulations and in their unwarrantabl' !av.t' in allowing divorce. He was bound to cross swords v-itl-, t'-e Pharisees.

Altr.otig: we have all heard of the fantastic prescriptions of the Scribe., and Pharisees, it might be well to remind ourselves how far-fetched they actually were. Many of them h.i r- A' with sabba.h-obxrv ance. Long th-- m-pk ir.rewt ■■■ f p.-n-.it.iith a 'rrm — f. r their c.i-uhc ç; r.r.i'fû. tri- bt' K- ermmed that thirty-nine works were prohib.'ti'd on ttia v.bcaih. One was making a knot; another st- not ■■ one. Such S'tnpli prohibit: as were n turn worked fû.y t::ats-'. I-': a-,an-y'? " R. Ak'r Guô ·? ζ it..-i-â -:v; t j b- t ubzci can te v-t.nl v r.r h π ■ 0 K- * ? man n.ighr tie tb.v -traigs of hvr girdle, it ■*;s ag ecv t.iat a 'a! might lie tied over well w?.h i t't i' h-r nc- w-b a i.-fv. "O- : s'.n.b t .. i r ■' ■ j . r.r, <(p -, ;ae b.ir.d.. str kt -igo. ii /« or Ja :c< ' It was forbidden. t*x>. to carry ir.- f: " min s wHc' dil r ; :-J.-n; :-< s';... pr.-.'-T. e j.: he; ' l , miglr Ikt 'TvI>- s R. Me... gi i.-ut With his woed.n k". R. » ti . o:u,,f 'J. ç» ■■< 'O' 5'... j. »F: i T.Γ.Γ Al", - ■ ;-'v'...

tys in which vessels or utensils might contract legal impurity. A (three-legged) table to which one foot is wanting, is clean; is it if a second foot is gone; but if a third is also gone and is to be used as a flat board, it is susceptible of defilement." ' ' he legislating propensities of Pharisaism reached an all-time high" about 260 A. D. when Rabbi Simlai succeeded in .ormulating " as many negative commandments as there are days in the solar year, and as many precepts as there are bones in a man"—by I know not what reckoning a total of six hundred and thirteen."]

In view of their myriad prescriptions, it was our Lord, and not the Pharisees, who could demand by what authority they taught these things, and neither they nor their modern apologists can return a satisfactory answer.

When our Lord declared/* " Upon the chair of Moses have I sitten the Scribes and Pharisees; all things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do," He could not have meant more than that the Scribes and Pharisees were to be obeyed when they proposed authentic Mosaic teaching." Their teachers had no claim on the obedience of the Jews when they were trying to pass off their own legislative fabrications as divine law, and our Lord more than once took the lead in transgressing these human prescriptions to make clear the line beyond which Pharisaic teaching had not the sanction of the divine Torah. As St. Thomas notes, they were to be obeyed so long as they sought *secundum intentionem legislatoris*. 4

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At the really critical question revolves around the historical value of the rabbinic documents. Jewish rabbis reduced their traditions to writing only as late as the year 190 A. D. in what is called the *Mishnah*" Besides the Mishnah, we have the centuries of their voluminous scholastic commentaries on the Mishnah in the form of the *Talmud*. These were compiled in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries of our era. From these sources

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the apologists of Pharisaism obtain the evidence which they oppose to the evidence of the New Testament documents.

What historical value have the Mishnah and the Talmud as evidence of the teaching and especially of the practice of the Pharisees of our Lord's day? A century and a half separate the final appearance of the Mishnah from the years of our Lord's public life. That is an uncomfortable gap to straddle. Moreover, during that interval two major catastrophes overtook the Jewish religion: the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 A. D. and the total overthrow of the Jewish nation in the years following 130 A. D. Despite these calamities, we are assured by the 'gist i.: Ph.iri-om tl at the rabbis adhered strictly to their ft tor.' ".ren t-ee transpl.anted their religion from Jeru-< .:)" <> c.:?r-r-. The ricus of rhe rabbis of the transi-Tl-i r.r' d :R. ? h.:;n b. ZAkf, -.ho died c. 80 A. D., and : F; - : : : ^-r. IV : Mishnah in the section ; -f : ■ '■■■ <' " P " ". l>-:t to this claim we may repiy Pr.,, »Swpûo ciiclit ccrltati'. we are able to give positive evidence that the Mishnah docs not afford a wholly reliable account of earlier Pharisaism.

It is a ■■■■■■ noticing, before calling attention to this dam-ag ■; r U-'C.. the y-- r\ D. :s r.ct the test 'c v; ■ r i, ■ -j- »rj0 a; v->ufd sh shown ti: !'pr. - i ■■■■■■' ; ■ ■■■■■■ :5 fo-rv '(■■■■■■ : r :ci. m -Pl ar -i' er... c i-u-.-t V-, ,e 'f he- d urn: ■■■■■■ ■. wh-; the ta- \$e. p.g.. arb. ■ j , t; ; l s- ;t ... , , , l

A 'urther we»ki>e.s tf the' rai'biric snir-.-c i- :t 'h. y o ■■■■■■ scl. oi Pharisee d rcurrens. The Saautce-s. t j- r ■ v ■■■■■■ ii -.-ncarc-with the de*truc»>n > : 'e ■■■■■■ 7 . X rtb ■ -c > tv.k.cc. s n) ■ the Ibsenes

irt-.-r. y ju a r. ■■■■■■ i -j TY - ; ; :eji u anstt ng a» jt = -jous . .tt s, ■■■■■■ ■■■■■■ oowr RMupt in the <2 m«>n of . sc'Olar : k.: Dr. A ■-re K 'l-rc »f Hir ard U- -.Ay v-ry nrohably ex'sud m ■■■■■■ es. ■■■■■■ it h; ■■■■■■ ; fet - ■■■■■■ I or i- * Ti c Mhnhah Mtn-

the picture too much to be regarded as giving an adequate station of Judaism in the early first century. Without a complete reconstruction of all the elements of early first-century Judaism, however, how can anyone prove that there were not the Pharisees as those our Lord condemned? The fact is the modern literature we have is simply unable to yield such an instruction, for it records, not Judaism of the time of Christ with all its lights and shades, but the later Judaism of the Pharisees. It is quite certain that the catastrophes of 70 and 135 in addition to the natural reaction against Christianity, produced among the Pharisees a unity they had not possessed in the time of Jesus.

One eminent English scholar, Burkitt, maintained that Pharisaism must have undergone a transformation in the course of the first century - great misfortunes it suffered, and emerged a purer, more spiritual religion." Indeed, we have strong evidence that in many respects at least the Mishnah reflects an idealized Judaism, as Canon Darby, who has translated the Mishnah into English, testified with great cogency that the tractate "Sanhedrin" in the Mishnah does not describe a real governing body as it existed in our Lord's day?" Instead it presents an academic version of the Sanhedrin drawn on the model of the *ri'organizi* body of the late second century of our era, the Sanhedrin with which the author of the Mishnah, Rabbi Jehudah, was familiar. And the late Liel Abrahams, Reader in Talmudic at the University of Cambridge, in sifting Canon Danby's evidence admitted that things in the Mishnah read like products of the imagi-

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... History In Trs pp. 105-111, see also Moore in
 "The Continuity of the Teaching of the Rabbis," vol. III, pp. 11-22. Maori
 substantial continuity of the teaching of the rabbis, while calling atten-
 tion to the simplification "which took place. Other scholars besides Burkitt, for
 example, Gressmann, are cited by Moore as denying substantially the
 continuity of the teaching of the rabbis; of the Gospel
 and since the names of none of the apologists of Pharisaism
 are associated with his volumes, one may conclude that he has not associated
 an apologetic. I think we could accept his careful statement con-
 cerning the bearing of our Lord's condemnation as given in Vol. I, p. 105. Whv P.
 in his extended review of Moore's work in *Recherches As Sciences Re-*
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nation/0 We may conclude that in the Mishnah we are given a picture of Pharisaic Judaism as it appeared after it had had its face " lifted

Finally, what assurance have we that the carefully selected texts from the vast rabbinic literature served up by the apologists deserve to be considered typical of Pharisaic teaching. What touchstone did Monteiiorc use when he rejected inconvenient texts as negligible? the usual Rabbinic paradoxes, and blamed Strack-Billerbeck for "taking playful exaggeration or cabalistic enjoyments too seriously"? Monteiiorc had to be told that "You can't get out from the Talmudic sea what suits, sour pur

Our conclusion of the P:

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... is twofold. First, that the delimitation in the rabbinic sources and that given by the apologetes is not so contradictory as the apologetes state; and secondly, that in so far as the Talmudic version set forth in the New Testament accounts, that of the Mishnah and the Talmudic documents of the Talmudic period have emerged safe and sound from the hands of the higher criticism? ... as a result produced a critical edition

... if ... it is true, show great ... But ... with the apposite ... in ... the first century. P. J

... or it standing ... Pharisees remain ...

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THE MORALITY OF ARTIFICIAL FECUNDATION.

THE FIRST REACTION of many' priests to the subject of artificial fecundation is to consider it as quite impractical. This, I think, is a somewhat hasty judgment. Eminent theologians of the past half-century have judged this question to have its practical aspects; and most of the ordinary moral theology manuals of to-day give some space to it. And I am told that within the past year a popular novel appeared that developed the theme of artificial insemination as the solution of the otherwise thwarted life of an unmarried woman. It is not long ago that the magazine, *Time*, gave not a little space to the question of " proxy fathers; " and only at the beginning of the present year another magazine, *Ken*, intrigued its readers with a very fantastic idea concerning fertilization without the aid of the male germ cell. Now, it is true that much of what our people read is sheer nonsense; nevertheless they read it, and, truth or nonsense, they ask us about it. For these, and other reasons that could be advanced, it seems that a discussion of the moral aspects of artificial insemination would not be useless to the practical-minded; and I am confident that it offers a measure of interest to those inclined to speculation. I propose to give here a brief survey of the subject as it has been treated by the moralists of the past five decades and to then enter on one or two aspects of the question that they have not yet thoroughly discussed.

In the strict sense of the word, artificial fecundation comprehends any attempt to fertilize a female by a means which is a substitute for natural sexual intercourse. Such a substitution may be called for in cases in which both husband and wife are unable to produce normal procreative cells but by an organic malformation or by some other cause which has prevented from having intercourse; or again in cases in which natural intercourse is rendered fruitless by an anatomical abnormality of the vagina which is fatal to the spermatozoa, and so forth.

It was, I believe, the first to introduce the question of artificial insemination into moral theology? According to the facts were meeting with a certain degree of success in

appended to this article. Unless otherwise specified, references are to the works and numbers listed in the bibliography.

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