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*THE SYNOPTIC EVANGELISTS AND THE
PHARISEES.*

IN the story of the Lord's life, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, the Pharisees appear as the most conspicuous among the contemporary Jewish parties. In the Second Gospel their name occurs twelve times, but with reference to five occasions only. The representation of them which St. Mark gives is simple and consistent throughout. They always appear in opposition to Christ, and there is no redeeming feature in their behaviour. This attitude of hostility is not, according to this Evangelist, of slow growth, but appears quite early in the ministry. In his second chapter he is already dealing with the first manifestations of it.

When we turn to the First Gospel we find this sinister portrait redrawn with even darker lines. It has long been recognised that "Matthew" betrays a strong prejudice against the Pharisees. In his book they figure as the implacable foes of Christ intent on destroying Him. It is on them that His most terrible denunciations descend. Their bitterness continues to show itself even after the Crucifixion (Matt. xxvii. 62). It is impossible to read the passages in which they are mentioned without perceiving that the writer is actuated throughout by a strong dislike of the Pharisaic party.

But it is perhaps less commonly realised that in the Third Gospel we have a remarkable contrast to the First in this particular point. St. Luke is by no means blind to the faults of the Pharisees nor does he deny that they rejected the claims and teaching of Jesus, and played their part in stirring up the people against Him. But he does not commit himself to an indiscriminate condemnation of them. He takes pains to discern between the good and the evil that were in

them. In his Gospel he paints such a picture of them that we are able to believe his later statement that some of them became members of the Christian Church (Acts xv. 5), a fact which would be almost incredible if we had no previous knowledge of them save that which is derived from the First Gospel. It is the aim of this paper to show by a survey of the relevant passages the extent to which the Evangelists differ in their estimates of the Pharisees, and to suggest reasons which may possibly have influenced them in forming their opinions.

(1) *Marcan passages repeated by one or both of the other Evangelists.*

In Mark ii 1-iii. 6 are grouped together certain incidents which gave occasion to the Pharisees to murmur: Christ's eating with sinners, the absence of fasting among His disciples, the plucking of corn on the Sabbath, and the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath. As far as the first three of these are concerned the three Evangelists display practically no variations, though it may be noted that while Matthew and Mark call the objectors to the corn-plucking simply *οἱ Φαρισαῖοι*, Luke distinguishes by writing *τινες τῶν Φαρισαίων*. But in the fourth incident Luke has softened the earlier account in two points. He has omitted the statement that Christ was grieved at the hardness of their hearts, and for the conclusion of the story, as given by the other Evangelists, that the Pharisees deliberated "*ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν*" he substitutes, "*τί ἂν ποιήσαιεν.*" By comparison with Acts iv. 13 it may be seen that this phrase does not necessarily imply putting to death.

This section involves another question for further consideration. At this point Mark alone associates the Herodians with the Pharisees. This unnatural combination of the foreign usurpers with the patriotic party among the Jews is found again in his Gospel at xii. 14, where it is retained in

Matthew also. In Mark viii. 15 the Lord bids His disciples "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." But here Matthew replaces the name of Herod by that of the Sadducees, and explains that by leaven is meant false teaching. Swete takes Sadducees to be "roughly equivalent" to Herodians here, and the leaven to be the "practical unbelief which springs from love of the world." But Allen points out (on St. Matt. xvi. 12) that the leaven of Herod can hardly be teaching, but must refer to some political action. If this be so the two names do not signify the same people and St. Mark is peculiar in mentioning Herod in this passage. There is evidence among the early traditions that Herod and his partisans were more active in opposing Christ than is generally realised. In St. Luke xiii. 31 ff. is a short notice of a plot against Him of which Herod Antipas was the centre, and in Acts iv. 27 Herod is named even before Pilate as being one of those who fulfilled the words of Psalm ii. about the adversaries of the Lord's anointed. A similar prominence is assigned to Herod in Ignatius ad Smyrn. I., while the Gospel of Peter (i. 1) goes so far as to make the arrest of the Lord the result of an order from Herod, whose consent has to be obtained later before the body can be removed from the Cross. Now it is by no means impossible that the Pharisees of the New Testament time would ally themselves with Herodians when it suited their purpose. In earlier days when they and their forefathers among the Chasidim followed nobler ideals this could not have happened. But at this period there is abundant evidence that they were as a class only too ready to substitute political for spiritual force. The author of the *Assumption of Moses* (composed, according to Dr. Charles, between B.C. 3 and A.D. 30) is a Pharisaic quietist who abhors the Herodian family and all its associations (v. ch. vi.), but it is clear that he is grieved by a general readiness among his fellow-Pharisees

to join the Herods when it served their own political ends. We may therefore conclude that Mark has preserved a true tradition in viii. 15 and that Matthew's correction is due to a misunderstanding.

Mark iii. 22-26. Christ is accused by "scribes from Jerusalem" of casting out devils with the aid of Beelzebub. Matthew repeats this charge twice (ix. 34, xii. 24) and in both cases puts it into the mouth of Pharisees. Luke, on the other hand, says that it came from some of the crowd (xi. 15).

Mark vii. 1-11. A deputation of the Pharisees come to ask why the disciples neglect the handwashing before meat required by the "tradition of the elders." Matthew repeats the story, and adds to it the report that the Pharisees were scandalised at His reply. Jesus then refers to them as "blind guides." This epithet is again applied to them in Matthew's Gospel (xxiii. 24), but elsewhere the metaphorical use of the word *τυφλός* is found only in St John ix. 41, where it is again employed with reference to the Pharisees. It would thus seem that there was a strong tradition that our Lord did so speak of them. But Luke omits the whole of this section, and when he quotes the saying about "blind guides" (vi. 39) introduces no reference to the Pharisees. Harnack considers that Matthew has preserved the more primitive form of the saying itself. Are we then to conclude that Luke not only deliberately altered the saying but also removed its connexion with the Pharisees?

Mark viii. 11. A sign from heaven demanded. Matthew and Mark both ascribe this demand to Pharisees. Luke (xi. 16) says it came from some of the crowd.

Mark x. 2 ff. The Pharisees came with malice to test Christ by asking His views on divorce. In taking over this account Matthew makes two important modifications: (1) He inserts the famous exception to the prohibition of divorce *μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ*. (2) In Mark after Jesus has answered the

Pharisees He goes into the house and tells the disciples that whosoever puts away his wife and marries another woman commits adultery. Matthew (xix. 19) includes this in the discourse to the Pharisees. This saying is all that Luke has preserved in this section (xvi. 18). In the very compressed passage of his Gospel in which it occurs it is difficult to know how far it was directly addressed to the Pharisees. But he records no malicious question on their part as leading up to it. It is noteworthy that D and some good Old Latin MSS. of Mark omit the name of the Pharisees here. Is it possible that in the proto-Mark they were not named, but that later scribes inserted them under the influence of Matthew ?

Mark xii. 12 relates that after hearing the parable of the wicked husbandmen "they sought to arrest Him." Luke supplies "the chief priests and scribes" as the subject. Matthew expressly mentions the Pharisees. In Mark and Luke this is immediately followed by the question about the tribute to Caesar. Mark says that "they," presumably the chief priests, sent some of the Herodians and Pharisees to ask the question. Luke does not name either of these parties. Matthew makes the Pharisees alone the prime movers on this occasion and says that they plotted to ensnare Jesus. Later in the same day a scribe asked Jesus which was the first commandment of all. According to Mark (xii. 28 ff.) the question was put in good faith, and the scribe's reception of Christ's answer was declared by Christ to show that he was not far from the kingdom of God. In Luke it is "a lawyer" who asks the question, and he does not appear in so favourable a light (Luke x. 25). In Matthew (xxii. 34) the question is stated to be the result of a meeting of the Pharisees at which they had deliberated how to attack Jesus. The next question is put not to but by our Lord, and concerns Psalm cx. In Mark (xii. 35) it is addressed to the crowd, as is clear from the words, "How say the scribes ?"

In Luke (xx. 41) the hearers are scarcely more clearly defined. But in Matthew (xxii. 41-46) they are explicitly said to be the Pharisees, and the incident ends in their confusion.

This is the last passage relating to the Pharisees in which we are able to compare the three Gospels. The great denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew xxiii. certainly repeats three verses found in Mark. But these can hardly be the basis of Matthew's chapter and Luke has retained the three by themselves (xx. 45-47), but has the discourse which is parallel to Matthew in his eleventh chapter. The First and Third Evangelists are here drawing from a source which is independent of the Second Gospel.

The general impression left by the examination of these parallels is that wherever possible Matthew aggravates the wrong-doing of the Pharisees either by adding to narratives in which they are already mentioned in the earlier Gospel, or by connecting their name with discreditable actions elsewhere not assigned to them. Luke, on the other hand, is as consistent in his endeavour to relieve them, wherever possible, from the odium of persecuting Jesus.

(2) *Passages in the First and Third Gospels based on the non-Marcan source (Q).*

Matthew iii. 7, Luke iii. 7. The stern address of the Baptist opening with the words " Offspring of vipers " is said by Luke to have been uttered to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him. Matthew, on the other hand, describes John as being moved to speak in this way by the sight of many Pharisees and Sadducees. The epithet *γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν* is again found in Matthew xii. 34 where Jesus applies it to the Pharisees. It is noticeable that in both passages it is connected with the comparison of the corrupt lives of the Pharisees to decayed trees bringing forth rotten fruit. Just as, according to this Gospel, Jesus takes up the Baptist's cry, " Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand " (cp. iii.

2 with iv. 17) so also He repeats this denunciatory phrase, and couples with it the same figure of speech. It is possible that when the Evangelist found these words in a discourse of Jesus addressed to Pharisees he argued back to the use of them by the Baptist and inferred that he also had intended them to describe the Pharisees.

Matthew xvi. 2-3 contains a rebuke for hypocrisy aimed at the Pharisees. The same rebuke is recorded in Luke xii. 54-56, but the offenders are there said to be the common people. This is the third passage in which we have discovered this distinction, between the two Evangelists. Mr. Wright in his "Synopsis," a book which lays very large obligations on all who attempt an investigation of this kind, sees the explanation in St. Luke's dislike of the "masses." "In all his writings the rabble—the lower orders—the illiterate noisy mischief-makers come in for censure" (p. 188). Does not this statement need some qualification? It is true that in the Acts mob violence is the subject of condemnation more than once. But this does not necessarily imply a general aversion to the lower orders. In the Third Gospel they are frequently depicted as being eager to hear the Lord, and rejoicing over His mighty works (v. e.g., c. viii. passim, xiii. 17). If the view adopted in this paper is justified the difference between the Evangelists would arise not from St. Luke's contempt for the rabble, but rather from his desire to be fair to the Pharisees.

Matthew xxiii., Luke xi. 37-54. A collection of woes uttered by our Lord. Harnack (*Sayings*, Eng. Transl., 96-105) holds that Matthew has preserved them in a form nearer the original of Q. If this is so Luke's alterations must be the result of deliberate action. These are: (1) Matthew uses throughout the address "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Luke omits the "scribes" and the "hypocrites." (2) After three of the woes have been recorded Luke inserts

a protest by a "Lawyer," who says that in these denunciations his class also is involved. The Lord then resumes the series of woes, but directs them against the lawyers, Pharisees being no more mentioned. The question then arises as to whether Luke employs the word *νομικός* as a mere synonym for Pharisee. If that were so it would be hard to understand why the Lord replied to the lawyer's interruption, "Woe unto you lawyers *also*." While it may be taken that *νομικός* and *γραμματεὺς* are practically synonymous, neither of them is exactly the equivalent of "Pharisee." Edersheim (*Life and Times*, i. 93) remarks that "although the lawyer generally appears in company with the Pharisees he is not necessarily one of them." That the scribes were not all Pharisees is shown by the phrases, "scribes of the Pharisees" (Mark ii. 16) and "scribes of the Pharisees' part" (Acts xxiii. 9), implying that there were other scribes who were attached to other parties. In Luke xv. 2 occurs the expression *οἱ τε Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς*, in which the two names are kept quite distinct. When, therefore, in this section St. Luke substitutes at the fourth Woe the lawyers for the Pharisees he seems to desire to relieve the Pharisees from having to bear the full weight of these denunciations.

(3) *Passages which are found only in one of the Evangelists.*

(a) Matthew v. 20. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." This was the most crushing condemnation of the Pharisees which could have been uttered. Their "righteousness" was a technical term signifying complete fulfilment of all the requirements of the Law (cp. Philipp. iii. 6). A century before the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount the ideal Pharisee's righteousness had been sketched in the Psalms of Solomon (v. Ps. S. iii.). The germs of exclusiveness and arrogance are

not lacking even there, and they had developed rapidly in the intervening years. In the first part of Matthew vi. there can be little doubt that the treatment of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, is intended as a warning against the defects of the Pharisaic righteousness. All this is peculiar to Matthew. If it was in Q Luke has not preserved it, and when he introduces the Lord's Prayer (xi. 1) he prefaces it with no polemic against Pharisaic and heathen methods of praying, such as stand in Matthew.

Matthew xxvii. The Pharisees join with the chief priests in demanding from Pilate the sealing of the tomb.

(b) Luke vii. 36-50. Anointing by the woman in the Pharisee's house. If, with Swete and Plummer, we refuse to identify this with the incident narrated in Mark xiv. the story is peculiar to Luke. The Pharisee's reception of Christ lacks courtesy, and he suffers a just rebuke. On the other hand, as Plummer remarks, "there is nothing to show that the Pharisee had any sinister motive in asking Him." Further, it is to be noted that Luke alone preserves the record of invitations from Pharisees and that on three occasions (cp. xi. 37; xiv. 1). The second is the more remarkable as it was given just after our Lord had been denouncing the blindness of the Jews of the day.

Luke xiii. 31-35. The Pharisees warn Jesus that Herod wishes to kill Him. It seems quite unnecessary to ascribe a malicious design to the Pharisees on this occasion. The admission of Bruce (*Exp. Greek Test.* in loc.) that they may have been regarded by the Evangelist as friends here fits in with the probabilities of the case. St. Luke nowhere gives any sign that he was aware of any connexion between Pharisees and Herod. The assertions of Mark that such a connexion did exist find no echo in his Gospel.

Luke xvii. 20. The Pharisees ask when the kingdom of God will come. "There is no evidence that the question was

asked in contempt" (Plummer). Jesus here by implication ascribes to the Pharisees the habit of *παρρηρησις* for the kingdom. This word does not occur elsewhere in the Bible, nor is it classical, but was used, according to Preuschen *Handw. z. N.T.*, s.v., quoting Wellhausen) of the careful watching of the heavens by sailors on a voyage. The Pharisees are looking in the wrong quarter for the tokens of the advent, but their desire to learn is genuine. We may compare the similar question of the disciples in Acts i. 6.

Luke xviii. 9 ff. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-gatherer. This is peculiar to Luke and as often expounded is made to convey such a condemnation of the Pharisees as would destroy any argument that this Evangelist wished to spare them. But we must, surely, hold with Godet that the story is preserved, not to prove depravity in the Pharisee but to show the futility of the system which he represented. He was not a bad man; according to his own standard his life was blameless, and included even works of supererogation. He is the best type of legalist, and for that very reason the better fitted to demonstrate the inability of legalism to commend a man to God. The tax-gatherer, on the other hand, is spoken of as *δεδικαιομένος*. Without claiming for this word here the full theological sense which it bears in the Pauline Epistles, we may admit that it already expresses the principle which it expresses in them. The tax-gatherer was accepted for his penitence by God, but the Pharisee for all his legal uprightness was rejected. Mr. Wright justly places the story among the "Pauline fragments" of St. Luke. It is not inserted in the Gospel merely to attack the Pharisees.

Luke xvi. 14. A statement, peculiar to this Gospel, that the Pharisees mocked on hearing the condemnation of mammon service because they were themselves covetous. Here, again, we may trace a connexion with St. Paul. In Romans

vii. 7 he says that coveting (*ἐπιθυμία*) was the sin of which the Law had made him conscious. Now without absolutely limiting *ἐπιθυμία* to the narrower sense of the word "coveting" we must admit that there is an unmistakable reference here to the tenth Commandment. Saul, the unconverted Pharisee, had felt covetousness to be the besetting sin of himself and his order. The Lord had this in mind when He gave the warning in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vi. 19 ff.). In the Apostle's later days there was no accusation to which he was so sensitive as that of covetousness (2 Cor. xi. 9 ff. ; 1 Thess. ii. 5 ; Acts xx. 33). He was no longer guilty of this sin, but his enemies took advantage of his Pharisaic extraction to impute it to him. So when St. Luke came to delineate the Pharisees he had to give this feature a place in his picture, if it was to be true to life.

Luke xix. 39. Protest raised by "some of the Pharisees in the crowd" against the acclamations on Palm Sunday. There is nothing corresponding to this at this particular point in the other Gospels. But it looks as if Luke had here inserted the protest recorded by Matthew after the cleansing of the Temple (Matt. xxi. 15-16). It is noticeable that here again is a striking variant in Syr-Sin. "Some of the people from amongst the crowd said unto Him, Good Teacher, rebuke Thy disciples that they shout not."

Inferences.

In the foregoing investigation, while many of the points are small in themselves, the cumulative effect cannot be mistaken. The Evangelists differ, one from another, in their method of speaking about the Pharisees. Can we suggest any reason why this should be so ?

In dealing with the First Gospel we are so entirely in the dark about its author that there is but little to guide us even in conjecture about him. But of his attitude towards the Pharisees two things may be said : (1) If he was a Jew he

could not have been a native of Jerusalem. No one familiar with the capital could have coupled together, as he repeatedly does, Pharisees and Sadducees, for the hatred which divided the two parties was notorious. Was he a provincial living in some out-of-the-way place? Or must we assign him a date at which the distinction between the parties had been forgotten? Schurer (ii. 2, p. 43 Eng. Transl.) points out that after the fall of Jerusalem the Sadducees disappeared from history, and even Jewish scholars soon retained only a very misty idea of the true position and doctrines of this party. Such a vagueness would see nothing incongruous in naming Pharisees and Sadducees together. We can only state this as a problem waiting for solution. (2) An examination of the relation of "Matthew" to Apocalyptic literature may help us to see where his sympathies lay. In the second and first centuries B.C. much of this literature had been the work of Pharisaic writers, e.g., the Assumption of Moses and portions of Enoch. But in the time of our Lord, Rabbinic Judaism, to quote Dr. Oesterley, "which represents the triumph of the Pharisaic party within the ranks of Judaism, practically banned the entire Apocalyptic literature" (*Doctrine of the Last Things*, p. 66). These books reflected the popular Messianic hopes of the day, and gave little heed to making a fence for the Law, which was the chief occupation of the Pharisees. Again, the Apocalypses laid stress on individual religion, and regarded with little favour the political activity which distinguished the later Pharisees. Now a reference to the introductions which Dr. Charles has prefixed to his editions of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs will show that the First Gospel more than any other book in the New Testament betrays the influence of these books. In Enoch Matthew knows not only the Similitudes which were also familiar to Luke, but also the section placed second by Dr. Charles

(cc. 83-90). (Had he been acquainted with the third part (91-104) with its strong denunciation of the Sadducees he might have been less ready to name the Pharisees in the same breath with them.) With the Assumption of Moses he has two points of contact, and about twenty with the Testaments. All this points to a man who was in full sympathy with the popular religious aspirations of the time, and, therefore, one to whom Pharisaic exclusiveness would be especially hateful. He was probably one of the *am haarets* whom the Pharisees held in contempt, and from whom they bound themselves by oath never to accept hospitality. His social position would then be similar to that of Matthew the Apostle whose work he seems to have incorporated in his own. Later ages remembered only one of these men of great faith, but obscure place, and ascribed the whole book to him.

To the formation of the verdict which St. Luke passed on the Pharisees three factors contributed, of which the least important may be stated first : (1) His artistic temperament. There is evidence of this in his books, quite apart from vague tradition. In contrast to St. John, who works only in black and white, St. Luke recognises that human characters display many hues, and will paint none darker than need be. (2) His Gospel and the Acts both reveal him as a man who honoured women, and was ready to learn from them. The evidence for this may be seen in Ramsay's *Was Christ born at Bethlehem* (p. 88) and Rackham's *Acts* (p. xxxi.) and need not be repeated here. Now we learn from Josephus that the Pharisees were, as a class, popular with women. They could look back to the reign of a woman, Queen Alexandra, (B.C. 78-69) as their own golden days. They relaxed some of the laws of disability under which women suffered. So a Gentile who conversed much with Jewish women would hear the best that could be said about the Pharisees, he would be able to judge of their strength as well as of their weakness.

(3) Luke was the follower of the great Pharisee St. Paul. The Apostle was never ashamed of his extraction. He proclaimed it in speech (Acts xxiii. 6, xxvi. 5) and in letter (Philipp. iii. 5). Was he likely to allow one who was closely associated with him to think nothing but evil of the Pharisees? In the time of Christ the majority of them were hard and prejudiced, but they were the descendants of the men who had uttered the finest plea for a forgiving spirit which the world ever heard before Christ Himself came (Test. xii. Patr. Gad vi.) and there were many among them who were still faithful to the earlier ideal. It is this mixed character of their class which is faithfully reflected in the Third Gospel. When the writer in the *Jewish Encyclopædia* (s.v. Pharisee) states that "owing to the hostile attitude taken towards the Pharisaic schools by Pauline Christianity, 'Pharisee' was inserted in the Gospels wherever the High Priests, Sadducees, or Herodians were originally mentioned as the persecutors of Jesus," he is alleging that which our evidence shows to have been the exact opposite of what actually took place. It is the lighter view of the Pharisees in the Third Gospel, not the darker picture in the First, which is due to the influence of St. Paul.

C. T. DIMONT.

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING GOSPEL CRITICISM.

ONE cannot rise from the study of the criticism of the Gospels without feeling that the conclusions at which each writer arrives—whether they accord with traditional or anti-traditional views—are determined in great measure by assumptions concerning Christ and Christianity which must affect his notions as to the limits of the credibility or naturalness of what he has read in the Gospels. I have for some time felt strongly that Christians who belong to