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The Pharisees

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T H E P H A R I S E E S

A thesis presented to the faculty of Concordia
Theological Seminary at St. Louis, Missouri as a part
requirement for the degree of

BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

by

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FOREWORD

This thesis was written as one of the requirements for the B.D. degree at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. The topic was suggested by Professor Albert Rehwinkel, M.A., B.D., and it was worked out under his supervision and counsel during the seminary's academic year of 1942 - '43 by

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SOURCE MATERIALS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO THIS STUDY

1. The Gospels and the Acts
2. The Letters of Paul
3. The Apocrypha, especially the books of the Maccabees
4. Josephus
5. The Talmud

The Old Testament Books of Nehemiah, Ezra, Esther, Chronicles, and Daniel are also of great value for our consideration, since they give us the historical background of the time preceding the rise of Pharisaism. The Talmud is of special importance in this study, because it is really itself a product of the Pharisaic spirit.

O U T L I N E

1. The Name and History of the Pharisees
2. Their Religion
3. Jesus and the Pharisees
 - a. The kind of Messiah the Pharisees were looking for
 - b. The kind of Messiah that came in the person of Jesus Christ
 - b. The clash between Jesus and the Pharisees
4. Bibliography

THE PHARISEES

We present here a study of Pharisaism with a view more fully to understand and appreciate the attitude of the Pharisees toward Jesus our Savior. The Scribes and the Pharisees were in a position of leadership in the church at the time of Christ's visible sojourn here on earth. They had studied the Old Testament; they knew the Torah; and they were acquainted with the Messianic prophecies. But when the Messiah came in the person of Jesus Christ, the Pharisees were the men who turned out to be His most stubborn opponents. Why? There must have been some reason for it; and it is our aim to get at the heart of this matter.

In working with this topic we have tried to be fair, open-minded, and impartial to the Pharisees, considering their actions in the light of their past history and in the light of the attitude that our Savior took over against them. We want to bear in mind, that though they have received much adverse criticism, they were men of like passions with us, men with souls to be saved, men who were much interested in matters of religion. The Lord Jesus Himself could encourage His disciples to do as the Pharisees taught, though He warned them against doing as the Pharisees did.¹⁾

The Pharisees were the most careful observers of the Law, the Law, as interpreted by the Scribes in accordance with tradition. The disastrous thing about this their observance of the Law was this that they over-emphasized the letter of the Law and failed to respond to the spirit of it.

THEIR NAME AND HISTORY

The name, PHARISEE, is derived from the Hebrew verb, פָּרַשׁ, meaning to separate, or to distinguish.²⁾ The noun in its plural form, פְּרִישִׁיָּם, then has the meaning of SEPARATISTS, and that makes good sense. It indicates

1) Cf. Matt. 23, 1-3

2) Cf. Deut. 33, 16

something regarding their origin. It is most likely that the term originated not with the Pharisees themselves, but rather with their opposition, as was also the case with other similar terms, such as Christians, Pietists, etc. They were people who separated themselves with reference to religion, not only from heathenism, but also from the rest of Judaism. E. Schuerer in his splendid and exhaustive work on the history of the Jewish People at the time of Jesus Christ has this to say regarding the term PHARISEES: "PharisaerAbgesonderte. Abgesondert von was? Von aller Unreinigkeit? Oder von Personen? Wir wissen nicht. Wohl beides. Denn die Unreinigkeit haftet ja an Personen - 2.Kor.6,17; Jes.52,11 - Paulus ermahnt die Korinther die Gemeinschaft mit unsittlichen Personen zu meiden. So meideten auch die Juden, spec. die Pharisaer, die im Lande wohnenden Heiden und Halbjuden und ihre Unreinigkeit, Ezra 6,21; 9,1; 10,11; Neh.9,2; 10,29"

The Pharisees were a group of men within the Jewish nation, a brotherhood that was most zealous for the religion of Torah. Schuerer distinguishes thus between the Pharisees and the ~~Pharisees~~ Sadducees: "Die Pharisaer sind ihrem Wesen nach die streng Gesetzlichen. Die Sadduceer sind die Aristokraten - zwei einander feindlich gegenueberstehende Kreise!"¹⁾ And that is true in a certain sense, but we must bear in mind that the Pharisees were the orthodox party, strictly adhering to the Word of God, as interpreted by the fathers (elders), of course. The ~~Pharisees~~ Sadducees were liberals in doctrine; they denied the existence of angels and the resurrection of the body. They were thoroughgoing rationalists.

THE HISTORY OF THE PHARISEES

It is not our intention to trace the history of the Pharisees back to the days of Ezra as it is done by R. Travers Herford, B.A. in his book, "Pharisaism - Its Aim and Its Method". Herford wants to impress his readers with a "more just appreciation" of the Pharisees than is indicated by the word, "hypocrites". After studying their literature for thirty years, he traces the history of the Pharisees and their development from its source

1) p. 388.

in Ezra to its final literary embodiment in the Talmud.¹⁾ But, while we shall not try to go back that far in tracing the origin and development of Pharisaism - which properly had its beginning at the time of the Maccabean Revolt - we must understand the historical events that led to the Revolt and to the rise of Pharisaism.

Ezra wrote the Book that bears his name about the year 458 B.C.²⁾ Ezra saw that the Israelites would have to separate themselves from the rest of the world if they were to survive as a nation. "They must become a closed corporation, a community occupying not merely a political, but much more a religious and social enclosure of their own;³⁾ not to intermarry,⁴⁾ not to have contact with the "Am HaAretz" The Law (Pentateuch) was there long before Ezra, but he reemphasized it to the people that they were to observe that law and to live according to its precepts. And if the people were to be encouraged to observe the law, there must be "preachers" and teachers, who will lead them; there must be someone to study the Torah and explain it to the people. Thus, in Nehemiah 10 we read of people, "who separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God....having knowledge and having understanding..... (who) entered into an oath to walk in God's Law, which was given by Moses, the servant of God" These men, who separated themselves from the people, the Sopherim, are to be identified with the Great Synagog, which had formulated three definite maxims: 1) Be deliberate in judgment, 2) Make many disciples, and 3) Make a hedge for the Torah. And these Sopherim were the teachers who were closely associated with Ezra. The idea behind "the hedge around the Torah" was, to keep the divine revelation from harm. The two points on which the religion of Torah took the deepest and strongest hold on the national mind of Israel were circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath. Though these had been observed before the time of Ezra, they became especially prominent after Ezra as the sine qua non of Judaism.

1) Herford p. 3ff. 2) Fuerbringer, p. 38. 3) Herford p. 3ff. 4) Neh. 10, 30

During the 160 years, from the fall of the Persian Empire to the Maccabean Revolt Hellenism with its shameless gaiety and vice was also infecting the Jewish nation. The few Jews who remained true in their loyalty to the ancestral faith were the so-called Hasidim (holy ones), the Assideans of the Books of the Maccabees. Thus we have in the Jewish nation at that time these two extremes: on the one hand, the Hasidim, and on the other hand the Hellenists; in between them were the moderates of various shades. 1)

The Pharisees, then were the successors of the Hasidim of the Maccabean times; and it is only from the Maccabean times that we can speak of Pharisaism as such. The Pharisees called themselves the Haburim (Genossen, Bundesbrueder, Brethren); and they were the ones, who during the time of our Lord's sojourn here among men# were accepted by the people as the real interpreters of the Scriptures rather than any of the other sects (Sadducees, Herodians, Essenes, or Zealots). Josephus tells us that the Pharisees had their real beginning during the time of Jonathan (160-143 B.C.), brother and successor of Judas Maccabeus. 2)

In the Babylonian Captivity God-fearing Jews sought ways and means of serving the Lord. But how go about that? They were too far away from the Holy City and its temple - besides, the temple was destroyed - consequently they couldn't observe the Sabbath by worshiping in the temple; they couldn't bring sacrifices for the same reason. No temple worship! No sacrifice! But one thing they could do: concentrate on studying the Torah; and this they did in a most thoroughgoing manner. When they returned to the Holy Land they set themselves to the task of rebuilding the Temple, reestablishing the regular services, and bringing the prescribed offerings and sacrifices according to the Law laid down in Torah. The study and the application of Torah went on unabated.

1) Herford p.29ff

2) Edersheim Vol.1, p.96.

Naturally, while studying the Pentateuch in this thorough manner, they also became well acquainted with the Messianic prophecies. And the more they studied this subject the more definite did their conception of the Messiah become. Certain definite ideas and hopes concerning the Messiah grew upon them, so to speak. The most prevalent idea was, that when the Messiah would come, He would be a temporal Ruler over them in the Holy Land and that He would free them from the yoke of conquering heathen nations round about. (We shall not go into detail here about the Messianic hope, but rather treat it more thoroughly in a later chapter of this paper). This Messianic hope became accentuated in the hearts of those who were in a position of leadership in religion as time went on. At the time of the Maccabean Revolt this hope was heightened both by the oppression and persecution, but also, and that especially, by the appearance of such men as Judas Maccabeus and his brothers. The Maccabean Revolt broke out against the tyrannical subjugation of the Jews under the Syrians. Whereas "Antiochus the Great respected their (the Jews') customs and courted their sympathy,"¹⁾ that can not be said of his successors.

Antiochus Epiphanes (175 - 164 B.C.), the eighth ruler of the house of the Seleucidae, enraged his subjects by religious intolerance. He stirred up the Jews by robbing the temple and setting up a statue of Zeus in the Holy of Holies; in fact he formally dedicated the temple to the idol, Zeus. He also pulled down the walls of Jerusalem, commanded the sacrifice of swine on the altars of the temple, forbade circumcision, and destroyed all the sacred books that could be found. The Jews were oppressed with unbearable taxes by the Syrians at this time; one third of their grain harvest and one half of all their fruit were gathered in by the conqueror. Then there was also a temple tax, a bridge tax, etc. And this brought on the Revolt of the

1) Dana p. 79

Maccabees.¹⁾

This Revolt of the Jews against the heathen conquerors was mainly a religious revolt, and as such it had the support of the entire Jewish nation excepting the avowed Hellenists. Mattathias and his sons, who started the rebellion, were fighting primarily for religious freedom, though their aim was also to establish political freedom. But if the Maccabees were carrying on ^{er} guerrilla warfare for religious and political freedom, the Chasidim were fighting for religious freedom only. Together with the Maccabees they fought manfully and valiantly. They hid in the hills and caves in the daytime and came out to fight and pillage at night. They were ready to lay down their lives rather than give up their religious tenets. And the result was that they suffered horrible martyrdom and persecution. But it was not in vain; they gained a brilliant victory over the Syrians and restored the worship of Jehovah in the temple. Thus they also restored hope in the hearts of the Jewish people, so that loyal Jews everywhere cried out their thrilling slogan: "To the Hills! To the Hills! For Jehovah and Judah!" And all of this gave the Jews a stronger hold on the religion of Torah and a firmer trust in their God, Who had helped them win the victory. The hope of the Messiah was strengthened, and the kind of Messiah that they looked for now was a Messiah who would be "Judas Maccabeus to the nth degree!"²⁾ It is said that Judas Maccabeus was the most noble and the most self-sacrificing man, the greatest among men from David to John the Baptist.³⁾

Whatever momentum Hellenism had gained among the Jews, that momentum was well-nigh destroyed by the Maccabean Revolt and victory. A Jewish prince was now at the head of the state; and the religion of all the Jews from palace to cottage was that of the Torah. And because the Jews were

1) 1.Macc.1,41-53

2) Professor Rehwinkel

3) Dana, p.82.

all interested in their common victory over the heathen conqueror, party strife and sectarianism all but disappeared from the Jewish scene, and the term Chasidim dropped out of use.

But gradually, as this revolt progressed and subsided, there appeared again a definite distinction between those who were strict in the observance of Torah and those who were interested only in the affairs of this life. One after another the sons of Mattathias had laid down their lives in their struggle for freedom from the Syrian yoke. Judas was killed in battle. Jonathan, a younger brother, was captured, thrown into prison, and later assassinated. Then the people turned to the last survivor of the Maccabean brothers, to Simon. Simon was a quiet and peace-loving ruler. Peace and prosperity prevailed throughout the greater part of his reign. His administration is characterized by an ardent Jewish patriot thus: "The land had rest all the days of Simon, and he sought the good of his nation; and his authority and his glory were well-pleasing to them all his days...And they tilled their land in peace, and the land gave her increase, and the trees of the plains their fruit....He provided victuals for the cities, and furnished them with all manner of munition, until the name of his glory was named unto the end of the earth." 1)

But after Simon there followed bitter days for the Hasidim. They had joined the Maccabees in their revolt against the Syrian in the hope mainly to protect the Torah and the religion of the Jews. John Hyrcanus, the son and successor of Simon, aroused the Hasidim to intense indignation. He was not only the political ruler, but also the high priest. But he was an adventurous warrior and an ambitious monarch. Under him the strict legalistic Jews came forth with their religious convictions as opposed to the liberal views held by others, and thus sectarianism began to assert itself again.

1) 1.Macc.14,4ff.

And it was here that Josephus first speaks of the sects known as the Pharisees and Sadducees. John Hyrcanus sided with the Hellenists and with the Sadducees, thus opposing the strict legalists, now known as the Pharisees, and here is where the religious patriotism of the Maccabean family disappeared. Aristobulus, the son and successor of John Hyrcanus, also flagrantly violated the sacred traditions of Israel. When he died, his brother, Alexander Jannaeus, came to the throne, and he was an outspoken enemy of the Pharisees; and the Pharisees in turn hated him bitterly. When opportunity presented itself, while Alexander Jannaeus was ministering in the temple, the Pharisees attacked him. To avenge this insult, he had 6,000 Jews killed in the streets of Jerusalem. The hatred between him and the Pharisees became so intense, that he saw his mistake and gave advice to his widowed successor, Alexandra, to cast her lot with the Pharisees; and she acted on his advice when she came into power (78 B.C.) - she immediately raised the Pharisees to power. Under Alexandra the Pharisees "won a place of supremacy, which they have not lost to this day....The orthodox Jewish Synagogue of today is the historical progeny of the ancient Pharisees!"¹⁾

So much then for the historical setting. We might say that the Pharisees were the Hasidim over again under another name. Or to sum up:

At the time of Ezra the religion of Torah was explained and practiced by teachers who were then known as the Sopherim. Later on, during the early days of the Maccabees, the Hasidim occupied a similar sphere of activity. And, of course, the Pharisees were the successors to the Hasidim. In the days of our Lord, the Pharisees called themselves Habburim, i.e. Companions, Friends, or Brothers.

1) Dana p.87

PART TWOTHE RELIGION OF THE PHARISEES

When we speak of the religion of the Pharisees we must bear in mind that they were guided by the Old Testament Scriptures, the Old Testament Scriptures as explained and augmented by the tradition of the elders. They had no "Pieper's Dogmatik"; no set and systematized body of doctrine, as we think of it and have it in our own theological studies. There is nothing in the Talmud that resembles our "Doctrinal Theology by Graebner"; nor is there anything like it in any other book of rabbinic origin. And yet we can glean much of what they believed and taught and practiced by studying the Talmud and other rabbinic writings, as well as from other sources.

We know, for instance, from the Gospels¹⁾ that they were a mission-minded brotherhood. They tried their best to make proselytes. Jesus says: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves!" From the fact that they went to the trouble of doing mission work we may gather that as a group they were honest and sincere; the trouble was that the foundation upon which they built up their entire system of religion was false. In this respect we may compare them with the Roman Catholic clergy. The foundation upon which they built was not so much the Word of God, but rather the tradition of the elders. And when a man like Wendell S. Reilly accuses the Pharisees of being "deficient in purity of intention" we can only wonder whether he himself realizes that he is subscribing to a system which, like unto the system of the Pharisees, is built upon the sand of human reason and tradition, rather than upon the solid foundation of God's Word.²⁾

Those people who joined the ranks of the Pharisees at the time of Christ had to vow: 1) Respect for vows, 2) Faithfulness to Levitical ceremonial

1) Matt. 23, 15 2) Reilly, in The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 1.

purity, 3) Regard for the property of others, 4) The payment of tithes, and 5) The avoidance of the "people of the land" ('Am HaAretz) ¹⁾ For our consideration it is particularly important that we take notice of this last point, point number five. "Ein Chaber oder Pharisaeer ist also ein Jude der das Gesetz mit Einschluss der *τελειότατος προσβυτέρων* puenktlich beobachtet. Abgesondert, besser, vollkommener als ein 'Am HaAretz (*גַּרְזָּן מֵאֵרֶץ*). In der Mischna lesen wir, "Die Kleider von 'Am HaAretz sind Midras (unrein) fuer Peruschim; Chagiga 2,7. 'Ein Chaber kehrt nicht als Gast bei einem 'Am HaAretz ein und nimmt ihn nicht in seinem Gewande als Gast auf; Demai 2,3. Wenn# also die Evangelien erzahlen, dass die Pharisaeer sich tadelnd ussern ueber Jesu# freien Verkehr mit den Zoellnern under Suendern, ueber sein Einkehren in deren# Haeusern (Mark.2,14-17; Matt.9,9-13; Luke 5,27-32) so entspricht dies genau dem hier dargelegten Standpunkte. Die Pharisaeer haben sich in der Tat von dem Volke des Landes abgesondert, insofern sie den naeheren Verkehr mit denselben gemieden haben."²⁾

The Sadducees denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the body³⁾ but the Pharisees believed in the survival of the soul, in the resurrection of the body, in the Great Judgment, and in the life of the world to come⁴⁾ We must say that the Pharisees were certainly much more faithful to the revealed Scriptures than were the Sadducees.

Monotheism was the cornerstone of Judaism, and especially also of Pharisaeism. They worshiped the God-one-and-undevided. With them this was not a doctrine to be argued about; God had revealed Himself as such in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament teaches us to recognize the manifestations of His power, His wisdom, and His goodness in nature and history and providence. "Dogmatic atheism and theoretical skepticism are the outcome

1) Josephus, Ant.13,10. 2) Schuerer 3) Matt.22,23 4) Moore, V.1, p.68.

of philosophical thinking, to which the Jews had no inclination¹⁾ God, according to Pharisaic belief, is the Creator of the world and everything in it; no other being shared with Him in that work.

Regarding free will, the Pharisees believed that God has revealed Himself in the Bible and it is the duty of man to obey Him. Those who obey Him will be rewarded, and those who disobey will be punished. The Pharisee believed that he was under the special and immediate care of God. "Though God is supramundane, throned high above the world, He is not extramundane, aloof and inaccessible in His remote exaltation....God is everywhere present"²⁾ Nothing can happen to the Pharisee except by divine permission. God sees and knows everything that he does and all that he is going to do; nevertheless the Pharisee's will is free. He is not compelled to obey or disobey. If he has sinned, he must repent, and thus make his peace with God. God will always hear his prayers.

For the time being the Pharisee considered himself a man who had much to endure in this world; but the time would come when the Messiah would establish His kingdom on earth, and then, he hoped, everything would be beautiful and lovely. Israel would then be freed from the oppression of the Gentiles; peace and prosperity and the fulness of the blessing of God would rest upon him. This Messianic hope of the Pharisees fluctuated with the tenor of the times. In days of severe oppression and persecution their hope for the Messiah was heightened, and in days of prosperity it withdrew into the dim background. The Jews as a nation knew that they were God's chosen race, and they believed that when the Messiah would come, He would rule over them in the land that God had given them. When they returned from the Captivity they returned with this hope in their hearts. They believed that God "would eventually deliver His people from heathen bondage and elevate them to the supreme place of power and influence among the nations"³⁾

1) Moore, Vol.1, p.359

2) Moore, Vol.1, p.368

3) Dana, p.131

Just exactly who this Messiah should be was somewhat vague in their minds. Some thought of Him as being a prophet sent by God. They evidently mis#understood the prophecy of Malachi¹⁾ that Elijah the Prophet should be sent to prepare the way for the Messiah; they took this to refer, not to the Messiah's forerunner, but to the Messiah Himself. Cf. Deut.18,15: "The Lord Thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me!" This explain##s also why some questioned John the Baptist as to whether he was the Messiah or not. However, the hope that the Messiah was to be a Prophet seems to have been a Samaritan hope primarily; the Jews themselves had mostly other expectations.²⁾

Others thought that the Messiah would be a Priest. This idea became somewhat emphasized at the time when Simon Maccabeus became not only the head of the secular government but also the high priest. At first the idea was prevalent, the Messianic priest would come from the tribe of Levi, but later it changed to the view that He would arise out of the tribe of Judah. However at the time when Christ came, this view was entertained by only a very few, if any.

Quite a number in Judaism looked for a supernatural, angelic Messiah, pre-existent and supramundane in character, who would be sent from heaven by Jehovah to deliver His people from their oppression³⁾.

But the most popular by far was the view that the Messiah would appear as a warrior-King, a political and military leader of the Jews. Under Him the Jews were to shake off the yoke of bondage with which they were being oppressed by the heathen nations. Heathen oppressors would be annihilated and God's elect race would become the world's conquerors. This conception was particularly prevalent during the two centuries of Roman rule. From such passages as the following⁴⁾ it appears that this was the standard view at the time of Christ: "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

1) Mal.3,1; 4,5; 2) Dana, p.132 3) Dana, p.133 4) Matt.21,15

Just when the Messiah would come was unknown to them. They depended on it that God would at His own appointed time come to their rescue. We shall have more to say about this matter, as to when the Messiah would come when we discuss the the topic, The Kind of Messiah that the Pharisees Were Looking For.

Concerning the hereafter the Pharisees believed in a heaven and a hell. For the righteous there will be a heaven, where they will be rewarded; and for the wicked there will be a hell where they will be punished. The righteous in heaven will live forever. The wicked in hell will be destroyed and made an end of. There will be no chance to repent after death.

Concerning angels. The Pharisees believed that man is under the protection of angels and liable to temptation and harm from evil spirits. The angels are God's messengers.

The Pharisee was glad that the Torah gave him so many precepts to fulfil#, because it thereby constantly reminded him of God and provided opportunities for serving Him. The Torah was the center and circumference of all his thoughts# and beliefs in the field of religion. In it God had revealed everything that He had revealed at all. It is the greatest gift that He could make, and He has given it all to Israel and has kept nothing back. In this connection I shall quote a section from the Mishnah¹⁾ the author is unknown, and it is called THE ACQUISITION OF TORAH: "Greater is Torah than Priesthood or Kingship. For Kingship is acquired by thirty stages (i.e. there are thirty qualities necessary to the ideal king), the Priesthood is acquired by twenty-four; but Torah is acquired by forty-eight things. And these are they: Study, the listening ear, ordered speech, the discerning heart, dread, fear, meekness, cheerfulness, purity, attendance on the Wise, discussion with associates, argument with disciples, sedateness; Scripture, Mishnah; having little business, little intercourse (with the world), little luxury, little sleep, little conversation, little merriment,

forbearance, a good heart, faith in the Wise, the acceptance of chastisements, (he is one that) acknowledges God, that rejoices in his lot, that makes a fence for his words, that claims not goodness for himself, that is loved, that loves God, that loves mankind, that loves deeds of charity, that loves uprightness, that loves reproofs, that shuns honor (i.e. when offered to himself), that puffs not up his heart with his learning, that is not insolent in his teaching, that bears the yoke along with his ~~#####~~ companion, that judges him favorably, that establishes him upon truth, that establishes him on peace, that settles his heart in his study, that asks and answers, that hears and adds thereto, that learns in order to teach, and that learns in order to do, that makes his teacher wise, that makes sure what he hears, that repeats a word in the name of him who said it? This list, which really includes 51 qualifications instead of the 48 announced at the beginning, varies slightly in different editions; but it may be taken as representing substantially the ideal character developed by and under the religion of Torah. We may compare that list with Romans 12.

But, sad to say, Torah meant more to the Pharisee than merely the Ten Commandments, or the Five Books of Moses, or even the whole Old Testament. Torah included both the Law of God and the tradition of the elders. Josephus tells us: "Die Pharisaer haben dem Volke aus der Ueberlieferung (ἐκ πρετέρων διδασχῆς) vile Gesetze auferlegt, die nicht geschrieben sind im Gesetze Mosis"¹⁾ and the Talmud tells us the same thing: "R. Eleasar aus Modein sagte: Wer die Schrift auslegt im Widerspruch mit der Ueberlieferung (תנן בן עזאי ורבי) hat keinen Antheil an der zukunfftigen Welt.....Es ist strafbarer gegen die Verordnungen der Schriftgelehrten zu lehren als gegen die Torah selbst."²⁾ Matters were added to the Law of God which were nothing more and nothing less than the word of man; but the things that were added were considered a "fence around the Law," which

1) Antt. 13, 10, 6. 2) Sanh. 11, 3.

was intended to keep the people at a safe distance from forbidden ground.

Thus they would ~~###~~ forbid the people to drink wine with the heathen, in order that the people might be kept from intermarriage and from idolatry.¹⁾

Josephus tells us that the Pharisees "made men believe that they were highly favored by God!"²⁾ They simply refuse to associate with the 'Am HaAretz.

They considered themselves better, separate, more righteous than publicans and sinners. In the Mishna³⁾ we read that even the clothes of 'Am HaAretz

were midrash (i.e. unclean) for the Peruschim. Also, "Ein Chaber (identified with Pharisee in the Mishna) kehrt nicht als Gast bei einem 'AmHaAretz ein und nimmt ihn nicht in seinem Gewande als Gast auf!"⁴⁾ and 5)

While the Pharisees were very religious, and religion actually determined all their aims, their religion was for the most part only a religion of outward appearance. Their hearts remained cold and untouched. Jesus says⁶⁾ that they made long prayers for a pretense: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous; but they had not the spirit of thos prophets. Their moral life had deteriorated to be a mere habit.

1) Jewish Encyclopaedia on "Pharisees" 2) Antt.17,3. 3) Chagiga 2,7.

4) Demai 2,3.

5) NOTE: We of the Missouri Synod are sometimes accused of having a Pharisaic complex. To quote an actual accusation, coming from a pastor of the United Lutheran Church: "Das ist die pharisaeische Selbstueberhebung der Missouri Syhode!" He was referring to Missouri's stand on Prayer-fellowship and Unionism in general. People outside of our synod find it difficult to harmonize our position with the Scriptural exhortation that Christians should "love one another". Maybe we have been guilty of an unevangelical attitude over against other Lutheran bodies in some cases. And maybe we ought to, in the light of our own experience, be a little easier on the Pharisees, where they insisted on avoiding the 'Am HaAretz. Of course we realize that the comparison is not altogether fair. After all, our Synod is taking its stand on the Sola Scriptura, whereas the Pharisees relied on the tradition of the elders.

6) Matt.23,14.29ff.

They laid stress upon outward appearance. Think of their fasting, their conspicuous borders on garments with broad phylacteries¹⁾: "All their works they do for to be seen of men; they make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments." Think of their literal interpretation of the Sabbath law,²⁾ their prayers at street corners, etc. All this and then the many rules and prescriptions regarding cleanliness.³⁾ "When the Pharisee saw it he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner." These are some of the things for which Jesus criticised the Pharisees and called them "blind guides which strain at (out) a gnat and swallow a camel."⁴⁾

THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS

We ought to have a very definite understanding of what is meant and implied by the term, Tradition of the Elders. This was a body of doctrine and teaching, decisions and interpretations, that were laid down from time to time by the rabbis. In many cases this tradition was handed down, not in writing, but by word of mouth from one generation to another. The Pharisees and their predecessors were the ones who kept these traditions alive by repeating them verbatim, and later also by writing them down.

When Jesus was a boy, Hillel the Babylonian stood out as a man who knew and interpreted the Law. At the time of the Destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) it was Johanan ben Zaccai. When he saw that Jerusalem was doomed, he gave himself over to the emperor Vespasian; and when the emperor asked him what he would like to have, he said: "Give me Jabneh and its wise men." Jabneh was a town in the Holy Land on the coast of the Mediterranean, where some of the leading Pharisees had gathered. His request was granted. And there Johanan ben Zaccai gathered the remnants of the learning and wisdom of Judaism. There he and his coworkers did everything they could to keep

1) Matt. 9, 14; 23, 5. 2) Luke 14, 1-6; John 5, 1f; 9, 14f.

3) Matt. 15, 2; 23, 25; Mark 7, 2f; Luke 11, 38. 4) Matt. 23, 24.

Judaism alive, in spite of the fact that Jerusalem^a was destroyed and the temple was gone forever. They now depended on the synagog more than ever. From the time of the destruction of the temple to the time of the disastrous uprising led by Bar Coch^ba (135 A.D.) the rabbis (Pharisees) met from time to time at Jabneh or Lydda. The failure of this revolt brought on a siege of terrible persecution, a time when the religious leaders of the Jews were hunted up and down the land, and Akiba, the greatest of them, was tormented to death. It seemed that Judaism was destined to go under; but the younger men, "the theological students" we might call them, carried on. We are told by Josephus¹⁾ of Rabbi Jehudah ben Baba, that he took six of his students into a secluded spot and there ordained them into office. But he had hardly completed the ordination when a group of Roman soldiers fell upon him and stabbed him to death with their spears. Those six young men survived, however, and they in turn continued the work of keeping alive among the Jews "The Tradition of the Elders"

Naturally this body of teaching grew larger and larger as one generation after another interpreted Torah and added their comments and interpretations. The first one to try to collect, arrange, and systematise this body of traditions was Rabbi Akiba. Later on it was continued by Rabbi Meir, one of the six young men ordained in the time of persecution. But this was the tremendous^e task that was carried on after long years of labor by Rabbi Jehudah ha-Kadosh, who is distinguished from all others as The Rabbi. He completed the collection of teachings and traditions about the year 210 A.D. and in the year 219 he is said to have died. That collection became known as the Mishnah.

Hereafter the rabbinical schools used the Mishnah as their textbook. But as time went on the rabbis again gave long interpretations - we might call them commentaries - of the Mishnah. And the result was that two new lines of interpretation and tradition were again started by two of Rabbi's disciples, one in Babylonia and one in Palestine. This mass of interpret-

1) Sanh. 17a.

ations of the Mishnah is called Gemara. And this whole mass of material, the Mishna and its commentaries, is today known as the TALMUD - One Mishnah, but two Gemaras. The two Gemaras have never been completed, although the Babylonian Gemara is more complete than the Palestinian one.

Besides the Talmud there is a huge amount of rabbinic literature from this period, which is known by the name of Midrash, all of it traditional, and all of it bearing on the religion of Torah.

We entered this detail, because we felt that this background is needed to properly evaluate the relationship between the Pharisees (rabbis) and Jesus. Although much of what has been said came after Christ's sojourn among men, we get a better understanding of the controlling spirit of the Pharisees during the time when Jesus was with them on earth.

THE TERM "TORAH"

The term, Torah, with the Pharisees had a technical meaning, a meaning which cannot be given with one word in the English language. The word "Law" (Greek: NOMOS) does not cover it.¹⁾ For the Pharisee the concept of Torah included the Pentateuch plus the traditional interpretations and rabbinic additions. Accordingly, if a Pharisee were to be questioned as to where the Torah can be found, he would answer: The Torah is the written Word (Pentateuch) and the unwritten tradition; and furthermore, the unwritten tradition is more important than the written Word. "Es ist strafbarer gegen die Verordnungen der Schriftgelehrten zu lehren als gegen die Torah selbst!"²⁾ ~~#####~~ "Rabbi Eleasar aus Modein sagte: "Wer die Schrift auslegt im Widerspruch mit der Ueberlieferung hat keinen Anteil an der zukuenftigen Welt!"³⁾

Accordingly, the Pharisees ordered their life and conduct, not only by the written Law of God, but also, and that especially, by the unwritten tra-

1) ~~#####~~ Herford.

2) Sanh.11,3.

3) Quoted in Schmerer, p.390ff.

ditions. This body of teaching is also known as the *Hallachah*. Because the Pharisees had this inadequate foundation for their religion, the Lord Jesus had to use hard language to point out to them that they were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; yes, going so far with this traditionalism as to "lay aside the commandments of God and holding the traditions of men"¹⁾

NOTE: We will do well to take notice of this attitude of the Pharisees and apply it to ourselves in our relationship to Synod. We, too, are in danger of basing our conviction, our doctrines, and our practice on the example set by our synodical fathers. Time and again our doctrines and our practice are held forth at synodical conventions as being supported by the writings and teachings of Luther, of Walther, of Graebner, of Fuerbringer, of Pieper, etc. After all, the Bible should be the last Word; where the Bible is clear on a given doctrine we can very well let it rest with a quotation of that Bible passage. We ought to think, not only of the traditions of the Pharisees, but also of the traditions in the Roman Catholic Church.

1) Mark 7,1-23, especially verses 7 and 8.

PART THREE

JESUS AND THE PHARISEES

This topic we shall treat under three heads:

1. The Kind of Messiah the Pharisees Were Looking For;
2. The Kind of Messiah that came in the Person of Jesus Christ;
3. The Clash Between Jesus and the Pharisees.

1

THE KIND OF MESSIAH THE PHARISEES WERE LOOKING FOR

We have already touched on the matter when we said that the Pharisees were looking for a Messiah, Who would be Judas Maccabaeus to the nth degree. The prevailing Messianic hope was that the promised Messiah would come as a warrior-King. And aside from the wishful thinking on the part of the Pharisees, there were good reasons why they should hit upon such an idea. Old Testament passages could be misunderstood and misinterpreted in this way. Jeremiah for instance writes: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a KING SHALL REIGN AND PROSPER AND SHALL EXECUTE JUDGMENT AND JUSTICE IN THE EARTH. In His days JUDAH SHALL BE SAVED AND ISRAEL SHALL DWELL SAFELY, and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!"¹⁾ And so they hoped that the Messiah would be a warrior-King, who would maintain the unity of Israel and free Israel from heathen bondage.

In other words, the Messiah they expected was not a Savior from sin, but rather a savior from political and heathen subjugation. They looked, not for a carpenter, but for a king; not for a sufferer, who would permit Himself to be spit upon and crucified, but for a mighty and powerful monarch, did they look. The great object of Israel's hope was their national restoration and their national glory. Everything else was but a means to this end. The Messiah would become the means whereby Israel would be exalted.

¹⁾ Jer. 23,5.6.

As much as we could gather from Rabbinic writings, the Pharisees did not understand the Bible teaching on Original Sin. Says Edersheim: "As far as their opinions can be gathered from their writings, the great doctrines of original sin and of the sinfulness of our whole nature, were not held by the ancient Rabbis. Of course it is not meant that they denied the consequences of sin, either as # concerned Adam himself, or his descendants; but the final result is far from that seriousness, which attaches to the Fall in the New Testament, where it is presented as the basis of the need of a Redeemer, Who as the second Adam restored what the first had lost. The difference is....fundamental...!"¹⁾ Naturally, if they did not understand the Scriptural fact of original sin, neither would they comprehend the necessity for a Savior from sin.

As far as Adam's Fall is concerned, they ascribed that to the envy of the angels. The angels, having in vain tried to prevent the creation of man, at last conspired to lead him into sin, and thus to ruin. The instrument employed was the serpent. Adam is then said to have lost six things, of which we could find only the following five: 1) The shining splendor of his person, even his heels being like suns, 2) His gigantic size, from east to west, from earth to heaven, 3) The spontaneous, splendid products from the ground and of all fruit trees, 4) The infinitely greater measure of light on the part of the heavenly bodies, and 5) The endless duration of life.²⁾ And their hope was that the Messiah would restore all these things to their original size and loveliness.³⁾ Furthermore

They expressed their belief that God is willing to forgive the sins of Israel if all were guilty. And to substantiate this doctrine with Biblical illustration and example, they referred to Israel's sin in worshipping the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. Because all had sinned, God forgave the Israelites their sin. But now, what about an individual, if he sins? Can he receive forgiveness also? Yes, if he repented of his sin - and the door of

1) Edersheim Ek.2, Section 3. 2) Ber.12,#21; Sanh.38b; Chag.12a.

3) Ber.R.13; Edersheim Ek.2, Section 3.

repentance is always open - God would graciously condescend and forgive him. To show that that was really so, they referred to David and his sin; David repented and he was forgiven. So might other individuals repent and receive forgiveness.

Really, they were not at all looking for a Messiah who would save them from their sin; they didn't need such a Messiah! According to the Pharisees, the physical death of Adam was the consequence of his sin; otherwise he would have lived forever like Enoch and Elijah. So also the physical death of any other person is the consequence of his or her sin.

Since they felt no need of a Messiah who would deliver them from sin and its consequences (spiritual death and eternal damnation), we can well understand that the conception of the Pharisees left no room for a Messiah who would give Himself into death for their sins. Certainly the Messiah would not die the death on the cross!

Thus all the spiritual aspects of the Messiah's coming were entirely overshadowed by the fond hope that He would be their King and Deliverer from heathen oppression.

WHEN, according to Pharisaic figuring, WAS THE MESSIAH TO MAKE HIS APPEARANCE? Edersheim says¹⁾: "The long discussion in the Talmud leaves no doubt that the final and most sober opinion was, that the time of the Messiah's coming depended not on repentance, nor any other condition, but on the mercy of God, when the time fixed had arrived.²⁾....Any attempt at determining the date of Messiah's coming would be hypothetical! Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman in the name of his master Jonathan (ben Eleazar), a Palestinian teacher of the first half of the third century, pronounces an imprecation on the calculators: "Blast the bones of those who reckon out 'ends; for when their computed 'end' comes and He (the Messiah) does

1) Bk.2, section 5. 2) Sanh.98, a and b.

not come, they say, Well then, He is not coming!¹⁾ And yet there were a large array of "prophecies" as to when the Messiah would come. Those "prophecies" compare favorably with the guesses of modern enthusiasts and sectarians who predict that the end of the world will come on this or that date in the future. Curiously enough, some actually did fix the date in Talmudic writings at 4,000 years after the creation of the world. Other dates were fixed at 4,291 after creation, 661 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, etc. etc.

Regarding the Messiah's PERSON, the Pharisees believed that He would be the Son of David, Who would come at God's Appointed time to reign over Israel, a righteous King, taught of God. He is Christ the Lord ($\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$), which is the Septuagint translation of Lamentations 4,20. He will be pure from sin. Never in His days will He be infirm towards His God, since God renders Him strong in the Holy Ghost, wise in counsel, with might and righteousness - we are reminded of the expression, Mighty in word and deed - He will purify Jerusalem and judge the nations who will be subject to His rule and behold and own His glory. Certainly He will be a divine person, highly exalted over, and gloriously overshadowing the ordinary human being. Certainly He will be above temptation; Satan would not assault or tempt Him. We quote from Edersheim²⁾: "Our Rabbis give this tradition: In the hour when King Messiah cometh, He standeth upon the roof of the sanctuary and proclaims to Israel, saying, Ye poor (suffering), the time of your redemption draweth nigh. And if ye believe, rejoice in my Light, which is risen upon you...Is.60,1...upon you only...Is.60,2...In that hour will the Holy One, blessed be His name, make the Light of the Messiah and of Israel to shine forth; and all shall come to the Light of the King Messiah and of Israel, as it is written...Is.60,3...And they shall come and lick the dust from under the feet of the King Messiah, as it is written, Is.49,23...And all shall come and fall on their faces before Messiah and before Israel, and say, We will be sergants to Him and to Israel. And everyone in Israel

1) Sanh.lc. 2) Book 3, Section 1.

shall have 2,800 servants, as it is written, Zech.8,23. (NOTE: The number, 2,800, is arrived at as follows: There are 70 nations, and ten of each nation are to take hold on each one of the four corners of a Jew's garment; and so we have 70 times 10 times 4 equals 2,800. It reminds us of the figuring that is commonly used by millennialists.)¹⁾ Let us also take note of this now - we shall refer to it again in a later chapter: It wasn't Satan who placed Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple to tempt Him! Why no, the fact that Jesus appeared on the pinnacle of the temple was a demonstration of the fact that the hour of Israel's deliverance had come; the Messiah stood there on the pinnacle to make public proclamation to all within His hearing that the Gentiles were now ready to give themselves over into voluntary subjugation to the Messiah and to Israel. Such was the Messianic hope in the hearts of the Jews, particularly also in the hearts of the Pharisees.

Now then, when Jesus came the Pharisees were disappointed in Him. They held that since He preached a kingdom quite different from that of Jewish expectation He was a false prophet who was not to be listened to. But He performed miracles! What about that? His miracles, according to the notion of the Pharisees, were wrought by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. They simply said: Jesus is practicing magic; He is leading astray, and deceiving Israel.²⁾ Religion as the Pharisees conceived it could not agree with religion as Jesus preached and lived it. And because Jesus did not measure up to their expectations, the Pharisees (together with the Sadducees) insisted that He show them a "sign", a sign direct from heaven.

1) Edersheim, Bk.3, chapter 1.

2) Sanh.107 b.

THE KIND OF MESSIAH THAT CAME IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

The Messiah that came in the person of Jesus Christ had this against Him, first of all, that He was not Himself a Pharisee. On the contrary, He was ~~###~~ diametrically opposed to the fundamental position and attitude of the Pharisees. He looked into their hearts and saw there a superabundance of hypocrisy; He did not hesitate to call their attention to the fact that their religion was based on man-made teachings, that their religious life, with all its fasting and Sabbath observance and tithing, etc., was little more than an outward display and perfunctory procedure. Their hearts remained cold and untouched, and Jesus had neither time nor respect for their hypocritical sanctity. The life that Jesus lived was the very opposite of that of the Pharisees in many respects. They were accustomed to standing at street corners while praying, so that they might be seen of men; but Jesus was wont to withdraw from the multitudes, seek out some secluded spot, to pray to His Father in heaven. Whereas the Pharisees were proud and boastful and paraded their religion for show among men, Jesus was humble and meek. Whereas the Pharisees avoided the 'Am HaAretz and refused to associate with them, Jesus sought them out, sat at meat with publicans and sinners, and showed His love and kindness and consideration to the lowly and downtrodden. Whereas the Pharisees were desirous of making an impression on the people - and their Messianic hope also included this idea that their Messiah-King would make a tremendous impression on the people wherever He would appear, and that He would live in a palace of splendor in the Holy City, the Capital of the world! - Jesus Himself said that He had no place where to lay His head. Whereas the Pharisees had expected Him to be above temptation, Jesus was tempted by Satan like as we are. Jesus did not ride through the streets of conquered capitals as Victor and Conqueror, nor did He thunder any dictums from the pinnacle of the temple to the nations that had to bow before Him and before Israel; instead He had come to seek and to save that which was lost; He

condescended to talk to an individual Samaritan woman at Jacob's well; He stood by the sea shore and prepared a meal for His disciples; He stopped under a sycamore tree to speak to a little man by the name of Zachaeus, and even went to this sinner's house to dine with him; in fact He was ready to stop anywhere on a dusty road to speak comfort and healing and assurance to the lowly and despised. The Pharisee could only despise the Lord Jesus for all this. Jesus simply did not measure up to his expectations. Therefore Jesus must be an impostor, a false prophet.

When Jesus made the statement, "My Kingdom is not of this world," this was sufficient proof to the Pharisees that He was not their long-expected Messiah, and He might as well have said to them: I am not the Messiah you are looking for. The Pharisees sensed it immediately that the purely temporal and national elements which well-nigh formed the sum total of their Messianic expectations were not even included in the Savior's "Kingdom of God." They didn't understand Jesus when He came with His Gospel of peace; they wanted a conquering warrior King. They expected the Messiah to lead them to victory over the surrounding heathen nations and to weigh down those nations with a burdensome slavery; but His Gospel of peace included also the heathen nations; and when He said that His yoke was easy and His burden light, this message was intended to be healing balm for the heathen as well as for the Jew. His heart was filled with sympathy and love for every nation, and for every individual sinner; He associated with sinners and preached to them in an appealing, loving way. His ministry was a ministry of loving invitation ("Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I will give you rest"), as opposed to the legalism and strictness of the Pharisees. And so, the clash between Jesus and the Pharisees was inevitable.

3
THE CLASH BETWEEN JESUS AND THE PHARISEES

We have seen that the whole religious training and background of the Pharisees was such as to set them against the Lord Jesus when He came as the Redeemer "to seek and to save that which was lost". They were greatly confused when they found that He claimed to be the Messiah but failed to measure up to their preconceived, perverted, and misdirected notions. However they could not afford to ignore Him, since His popularity was growing by leaps and bounds and their own popularity was waning. Hitherto they had enjoyed the confidence of the people; the people had looked upon them as being the most godly and religious and informed men in the world of religion. Now the people were flocking to Jesus; they heard Him gladly, because they felt that He had something really worthwhile listening to whenever He opened His mouth to speak. "He taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes"¹⁾ That aroused a certain amount of jealousy in the hearts of the Pharisees. They became bewildered when they saw that Jesus set His own opinions over against the tradition of the elders. The Pharisees had been accustomed to look on the tradition of the elders as being the last word in matters of religion. The tradition of the elders were to the Pharisees what "The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent" are to the Roman Catholics. In utter surprise they threw up their hands and asked, "Whence has this man this wisdom?" "By what authority doest Thou these things?" Jesus was pointing the way to heaven, and the way that He pointed out was different from the way that was pointed out by the Pharisees. And what is more, the people were listening with rapt attention to the words that fell from the lips of Jesus; "they heard Him gladly"; "they hung on His words, listening". And that worried the Pharisees. The result was that they

1) Matt. 7,29

tried everything possible to do away with Him. They attacked His teachings at every possible occasion and they attacked His person. "No Pharisee could consent to the conclusion that it was permissible to pluck corn on the Sabbath"¹⁾ as did the disciples of Jesus;²⁾ nor could the Pharisees approve of Jesus when He healed (a man suffering with a withered hand) on the Sabbath day. "The Pharisees instilled into the people a dislike for Jesus; they said that He was a Transgressor and a ~~Friend~~ ^{Friend} of transgressors - publicans, sinners, hysterical women - and that His cures were due to unholy powers, that He was possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and was therefore able to heal the sick.... These comments by the Pharisees influenced the mother and brethren of Jesus (His father apparently was already dead) 'And His kindred (οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ) heard and went out to lay hold on Him (κρατῆσαι αὐτόν), for they said, He is beside Himself' (ὅτι ἐξέστη)"³⁾ When we read the Gospel accounts we get the impression that the Pharisees did try everything they could to set the people against Jesus.

Because Jesus took a stand against the tradition of the elders, the Pharisees understood and explained that as though Jesus had taken a stand against the Law of God. That's why Jesus told them in so many words, "Think not that I came to destroy the Law. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil"⁴⁾ Christ had no quarrel with the Law of God; but He did have a quarrel with the Pharisees who perverted the Law and substituted for the Commandments of God the commandments of men.

The real situation, then, was this: the Pharisees matched the tradition of the elders against the Son of God Himself. The tradition of the elders was to the Pharisee what Jesus and the Word of God are to us. We look upon Christ and His Word as the final authority in matters of doctrine and practice. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, looked upon the tradition of the elders as their final authority; and herein lay the dynamite.

1) Klausner, p.278. 2) Luke 6,1. 3) Klausner 4) Matt.5,17.

This dynamite was ready to explode on short notice at any time. Therefore, when Jesus claimed power to forgive sins, the Pharisees immediately interpreted that as being blasphemy: "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"¹⁾ "And when the Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"²⁾ Again "Why do the ~~disciples~~ disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, and Thy disciples fast not?"³⁾ And when Jesus and His disciples went through a corn field on a Sabbath Day and His disciples plucked ears of corn (probably, wheat) and rubbed it between the ~~palms~~ palms of their hands, the Pharisees were quick to interpret that as being threshing, a violation of the Sabbath Law.⁴⁾ All these things, and a thousand others, the Pharisees found fault with and "took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him."⁵⁾

Realizing their religious background and their training as well as their disappointment in finding an altogether different Messiah from what they had expected, we almost feel sorry for the Pharisees. Through a study such as this we must arrive at the conclusion: Though we cannot excuse the Pharisees for the stand they took over against Jesus, we can at least understand the reason why they did take such a stand.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we might summarize as follows: The Pharisees came out of distress and persecution and saved Judaism from disintegration. They went astray by following the Tradition of the Elders rather than the Prophecies of the sure Word of God. Because they followed tradition rather than revelation, they developed in their own minds false expectations regarding the Messiah who was to come. And when the Messiah came in the Person of Jesus Christ, the inevitable happened - the Pharisees clashed with Him head on, because of their preconceived ideas and prejudices.

1) Mark 2, 7. 2) Mark 2, 16 3) Mark 2, 18 4) Mark 2, 23ff 5) Mark 3, 6.

We may derive much spiritual benefit from an evaluation such as this.

We may be warned by the mistakes of the Pharisees and profit thereby. There is a real danger for any group or for any individual to reduce religion to a mere outward, mechanical thing. There is also a real danger for any given church body to fall into the rut of traditionalism. May God and His Word be and remain our Protection and Shield, so that our religion may remain pure and strong.

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