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Sketching the Pharisees

Roger M. Rundell

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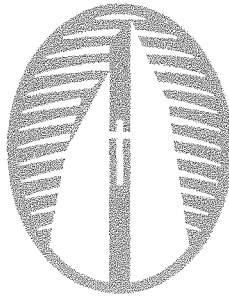
SKETCHING THE PHARISEES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (THEOLOGICAL STUDIES)

BY
ROGER M. RUNDELL

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We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

(Kent L. Yinger)

(Stephen Delamarter)

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	viii
Chapters	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. RECENT SCHOLARLY RECONSTRUCTIONS	7
3. JOSEPHUS' PHARISEES	16
4. NEW TESTAMENT PHARISEES	44
5. RABBINIC LITERATURE AND PHARISEES	75
6. CONCLUSION: SKETCHING THE PHARISEES	95
BIBLIOGRAPHY	104

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the Pharisees and their place in Palestinian society, particularly during the first century. Recent scholarly reconstructions are reviewed and compared to the evidence found in the works of Josephus, the New Testament, and rabbinic literature. This paper examines the Pharisees through the eyes of each source and attempts to use each viewpoint to develop a picture of the Pharisaic movement. The evidence proves too ambiguous to clarify the fine details of the movement, and it resists placing them at the top of the Jewish social or religious system. It does, however, suggest that the Pharisees represent a recognizable, well-known, and even celebrated expression of mainline Judaism, and it is possible that the movement's positive reputation offered members special opportunities which lead to a measure of influence in society. This conclusion is useful as a basis for multiple reconstructions, including some of the scholarly reconstructions reviewed in the paper.

ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations in this paper generally correspond to those defined in *The SBL*

Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies, eds. Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999). A few of the abbreviations used in this work are listed here for convenience.

<i>'Abod. Zar.</i>	<i>'Aboda Zara</i>	<i>Mek.</i>	<i>Mekilta</i>
<i>'Abot R. Nat.</i>	<i>'Abot de Rabbi Nathan</i>	<i>Midr.</i>	<i>Midraš</i>
<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>	<i>Nid.</i>	<i>Niddah</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>	<i>Pesah.</i>	<i>Pesahim</i>
<i>b.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>	<i>Rab.</i>	<i>Rabbah</i>
<i>Bek.</i>	<i>Bekorot</i>	<i>Roš Haš.</i>	<i>Roš Haššana</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakot</i>	<i>Šabb.</i>	<i>Šabbat</i>
<i>'Erub.</i>	<i>'Erubin</i>	<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Git.</i>	<i>Gittin</i>	<i>Šeqal.</i>	<i>Šeqalim</i>
<i>Hag.</i>	<i>Hagiga</i>	<i>Sukk.</i>	<i>Sukka</i>
<i>Hist. Eccl.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>	<i>t.</i>	<i>Tosepta</i>
<i>Ker.</i>	<i>Keritot</i>	<i>War</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>
<i>Ketub.</i>	<i>Ketubot</i>	<i>y.</i>	<i>Jerusalem Talmud</i>
<i>m.</i>	<i>Mishnah</i>	<i>Yad.</i>	<i>Yadayim</i>
<i>Ma 'aš Š.</i>	<i>Ma 'aš Šeni</i>	<i>Yebam.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megilla</i>		

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

In the past, many portraits have been developed for the Pharisees. They have been vilified by stark black and white drawings in which they appear hypocritical and self-righteous, and they have been glorified by colorful paintings in which they appear wise and pious. Their origins have been pondered,¹ as has the meaning of their name.² Inquiries into their distinctive doctrines,³ apocalyptic vision,⁴ political involvement,⁵ religious influence,⁶ and social status⁷

¹ E.g. L. Finkelstein, "The Origin of the Pharisees," *Conservative Judaism* 23 (1969): 25-36; H. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea*, 2nd ed. (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1980), 26; and R. T. Beckwith, "The Pre-History and Relationship of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes: A Tentative Reconstruction," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1982): 31.

² E.g. M. D. Hussey, "The Origin of the Name Pharisee," *JBL* 39 (1920): 66-69; T. W. Manson, "Sadducee and Pharisee: The Origin and Significance of their Names," *BJRL* 21 (1938): 144-159; S. S. Cohon, "Pharisaism: A Definition," in *Joshua Bloch Memorial Volume: Studies in Booklore and History*, eds. A. Berger, L. Marwick, and I. S. Meyer (New York: The New York Public Library, 1960), 67-70; J. Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 4; and A. I. Baumgarten, "The Name of the Pharisees," *JBL* 102 (1983): 411-428.

³ E.g. R. T. Herford, *The Pharisees*, (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 29-35; G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 1:66; J. Z. Lauterbach, "The Pharisees and their Teachings," *HUCA* 6 (1929): 69, 119, 133; Manson, 154; K. Schubert, "Jewish Religious Parties and Sects," in *The Crucible of Christianity: Judaism, Hellenism and the Historical Background to the Christian Faith*, ed. A. Toynbee (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), 89; and E. Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 71.

⁴ E.g. R. H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Schocken, 1963), 171-195, and *Religious Development between the Old and New Testaments* (London: Oxford, 1914), 33-34; C. C. Torrey, "Apocalypse," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, eds. Cyrus Adler and Isidore Singer (New York: KTAV, 1901), 673; Moore, *Judaism*, 1:127-128; Lauterbach, 136; J. Klausner, *The Messianic Ideal in Israel: From its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, trans. W. F. Stinespring (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), 393; and W. D. Davies, "Apocalyptic and Pharisaism," in *Christian Origins and Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1962), 19-30.

⁵ E.g. Herford, *The Pharisees*, 29-31, 45-52; Lauterbach, 70; W. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus: An Inquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 189-190; G. Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World: Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple and the Talmud*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 1-47; D. Polish, "Pharisaism and Political Sovereignty," *Judaism* 19 (1970): 415-418; J. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 65-66; and E. P. Sanders, *Judaism Practice & Belief 63BCE-66CE*, (Philadelphia: Press International, 1994), 388-402.

have left a vast array of conclusions.⁸ The more one examines the pictures of Pharisaism, the more one encounters contradiction. Consequently, one begins to wonder if reconstructions of the Pharisees contain more art than history.

Fed up with the contradiction, many scholars have sought to peel away the excess layers of dubious information and find a solid base from which to reconstruct the Pharisees.⁹ This has been done by delimiting literary evidence to the sources which explicitly offer information about the Pharisees, and then examining the information with a critical eye on the nature of the source and the historical context in which it was written.¹⁰ The most recent result has been a great deal of uncertainty about the historical Pharisees, and an unwillingness to speculate too far into the nature of their movement.¹¹ The confusion has been captured nicely by Joseph Sievers' playful but sobering statement: "we know considerably less about the Pharisees than an earlier generation 'knew.'"¹²

The bewilderment that the quest for the historical Pharisees has produced is particularly frustrating because their existence coincides with an important period of Jewish and Christian history, the Second Temple period. They play a prominent role in the gospel narratives and in some of Josephus' work. They also appear several times in rabbinic literature, depending on how one defines a pericope as Pharisaic. Their presence in these sources gives historians and

⁶ E.g. Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 14, 65-66; Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 252-253, 258-259; Maccoby, *Revolution*, 59-64; and Sanders, *Practice & Belief*, 399-404, 407, 448-451.

⁷ E.g. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of Their Faith*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 1:75-76; and Sanders, *Practice & Belief*, 404-407.

⁸ See S. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (Boston and Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 1-3 and notes.

⁹ E.g. Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 6; Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 31-32; Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 9-10; and J. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Companions and Competitors* (New York et al.: Doubleday, 2001), 3:313-332.

¹⁰ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 4-16.

¹¹ Meier, "The Quest for the Historical Pharisee: A Review Essay on Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer*," *CBQ* 61 no. 4 (1999): 714.

¹² J. Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" in *Hillel and Jesus*, eds. J. H. Charlesworth and L. L. Johns (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 138.

theologians hope that their movement can be understood better, thus giving the modern world a better view of the world that gave birth to formative Judaism and Christianity. At the same time, however, the ambiguity of historical resources makes this no easy task.

With all the scholarly confusion firmly in mind, the current work seeks to answer the question, *who were the Pharisees in Palestinian society during the first century C.E.?* This question relates to several aspects of the Pharisaic movement, including: their organization, whether as a cohesive group or a loose-knit body of individuals; their influence, politically, religiously, and socially; their power base (i.e. from whom did they derive power to exert influence?); and their social stability (i.e. did they experience periods of decline and advancement, particularly around the important date of 70 C.E.). This study cannot hope to answer this question in its entirety. Some aspects of the question may even prove impossible to answer at the present time. This undertaking, however, will examine the evidence that is currently available and seek to posit some possibilities about the Pharisees in their social context.

B. Methodology

1. The Reliable Sources

Designating reliable sources is an important first step into an inquiry about the Pharisees. Several ancient documents have been used as Pharisaic or as sources for Pharisaism despite the absence of an obvious reference to the Pharisees within them.¹³ For example, 1 and 2 Maccabees have been utilized due to their references to a group called *hasidim* (e.g. 1 Macc. 2:42; 7:12-13; 2 Macc. 14:6).¹⁴ The connection between the *hasidim* and the Pharisees, however, is a difficult

¹³ For information see Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 7-9. Cf. Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 4; and Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 31.

¹⁴ E.g. J. Wellhausen, *The Pharisees and Sadducees*, trans. M. E. Biddle (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001), 78f, 81; and J. Kampen, *The Hasideans and the Origin of Pharisaism: A Study in 1 and 2 Maccabees* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 215, 222.

one to sustain.¹⁵ The *Psalms of Solomon* have also received much attention in Pharisaic studies.

Many have favored Pharisaic authorship.¹⁶ They have, however, also been classified as anti-

Pharisaic.¹⁷ Mason notes that this is characteristic of many studies which have been done on

sources that did not explicitly name the Pharisees, including *Assumption of Moses* and *Jubilees*.¹⁸

That such assumptions can lead to mistakes has been demonstrated by the *Covenant of*

Damascus or *Damascus Document* (CD). Among some scholars, CD was once considered

Pharisaic in origin.¹⁹ Fragments of CD, however, have been discovered at Qumran. Its

discovery there and its similarity to another Qumran document, the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS),

make it unlikely that CD offers any reliable data about the Pharisaic movement.²⁰

Neusner and Rivkin attempted to eliminate these dangers in their work on the Pharisees.

Neusner argued:

Secure attribution of a work can only be made when an absolutely peculiar characteristic of the possible author can be shown to be an essential element in the structure of the whole work. No reliance can be placed on elements which appear in only one or another episode, or which appear in several episodes but are secondary and detachable details. These may be accretions. Above all, motifs which are not certainly peculiar to one sect cannot prove that sect was the source. No available assignment of an apocryphal or pseudepigraphical book to a Pharisaic author can pass these tests.²¹

¹⁵ See G. Stemmerger, *Jewish Contemporaries of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes*, trans. A. W. Mahnke (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 96-104.

¹⁶ E.g. Wellhausen, 99; Moore, *Judaism*, 1:182; M. Black, "Pharisees," *IDB* 3 (1962): 777; A. Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth: A Study of Their Background, Their Halachic and Midrashic Teachings, the Similarities and Differences*, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums*, Bd. 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), 7-8; D. S. Russell, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, New Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 164.

¹⁷ E.g. Schubert, 89.

¹⁸ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 8-9.

¹⁹ See e.g. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, trans. F. H. Cave and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 259, where Jeremias notes that he once thought CD was Pharisaic.

²⁰ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 9.

²¹ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 4.

Neusner, therefore, chose to limit his sources to “Josephus, the Gospels, and rabbinical literature, beginning with the Mishnah.”²² Rivkin limited his sources to those documents that mentioned the Pharisees by name and had been authored by (or carried traditions from) first-hand witnesses of the pre-70 period.²³ For Rivkin, this similarly meant limiting his sources to “Josephus, the New Testament, and Tannaitic Literature.”²⁴ Several other scholars have recognized the validity of confining the study of the Pharisees to these three bodies of literature for the time being, and have followed suit for the most part.²⁵ Likewise, the current work will be restricted to information on the Pharisees that is available in Josephus’ works (chapter 3), the New Testament (chapter 4), and rabbinic literature (chapter 5).

2. *Understanding the Unique Pharisaic Portraits from each Source*

Various methodologies have been applied to studies of the Pharisees which have sought to establish a reliable picture of them in their first century setting.²⁶ This is difficult due to the nature of the source material, even when limited to the three bodies of literature listed above. Josephus, the Christian writers, and the Jewish rabbis each possessed their own subjective views about the Pharisees, and each wrote about them for different reasons.²⁷ The resulting pictures one receives from each literary group are notably dissimilar from one another. Josephus’ political narrative, written to a Greco-Roman readership, renders a political portrayal of the

²² Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 4.

²³ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 31.

²⁴ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 31.

²⁵ E.g. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, with a forward by J. C. VanderKam (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. and Dove Booksellers, 2001) 11; Stemberger, 3-4; and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 10, who notes that some day other sources might be confidently explored, but only after a “body of ‘control’ information” has been secured from the three sources which are now known to be reliable, if that is possible. For an example of an author who continues to utilize other sources for Pharisaic material (e.g. 1 and 2 Maccabees, 4QMMT, and 4 Ezra) see R. Deines, “The Pharisees Between ‘Judaisms’ and ‘Common Judaism,’” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, eds. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, and M. A. Seifrid (Tübingen and Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck and Baker Academic, 2001), 456-490.

²⁶ For more details, see Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 10-14.

²⁷ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 10; and Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 2, and 4.

Pharisees; the gospel writers' Messianic drama, written to a newly forming Christian community which was struggling for identity in the shadow of Judaism, employs the Pharisees as a source of conflict and debate; and the rabbis' memoirs, written to a Judaism under reconstruction in the wake of the temple's destruction, offer a compilation of (idealized) traditions from wise men, some of whom may have been Pharisees.²⁸ These diverse viewpoints must be considered.²⁹

Each chapter, therefore, will be dedicated to understanding the Pharisees in the designated source, as they have been portrayed by their respective author(s). There will be no attempt to synthesize the information offered from one body of literature with another until the final chapter (chapter 6). The current work seeks to understand *how each author sketched the Pharisees in their society*, and *why the author may have wished to portray the Pharisees as they did*. Scholarly opinion will be reviewed (chapter 2) and examined against the relevant texts to help guide and inform this study.

C. Preview to the Conclusion

This paper ultimately interprets the evidence in such a way that the Pharisees are viewed as a small and distinctive movement within mainline Judaism, known and celebrated for their piety, and enjoying some limited influence due to their general popularity. This paper will challenge any *certainty* that the Pharisees controlled or created normative Judaism in either the pre or post-70 years. It also challenges the assertion that the Pharisees were a closed movement only interested in their own salvation and piety. Readers of this work should expect to come into contact with some of the ambiguities of the evidence, and some of the difficulties of defining the Pharisees in Palestinian society. The final sketch of the Pharisees offered in this paper is largely vague and indeterminate, but might serve as a viable basis for future reconstructions.

²⁸ See Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 4 and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 10.

²⁹ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 10-16.

CHAPTER TWO

RECENT SCHOLARLY RECONSTRUCTIONS

As previously mentioned, popular scholarly opinion once held without question that the Pharisees were the dominant religious group in Second Temple Palestine. In a 1956 essay, Morton Smith challenged the notion that the Pharisees held vast influence over the Jewish masses before 70 C.E.¹ After mentioning several “varieties of first-century Judaism,” Smith asked: “How, then, are we to account for the tradition which makes the Pharisees the dominant group?”² Smith’s answer to this question was twofold: (a) the rabbis, whom Smith presumed were the Pharisaic heirs, recorded a pro-Pharisaic tradition; and (b) Josephus asserted Pharisaic influence over the Jewish people.³ Smith believed that these inaccurate representations occurred because the Pharisees were involved in a power struggle after the destruction of the temple, a struggle he thought they had ultimately won. Smith focused on Josephus to help prove his theory. Noticing that Josephus’ description of the Pharisees’ influence was more elaborate in his later works, *Antiquities of the Jews* (ca. 95 C.E.) and *Life* (ca. 100 C.E.) versus *Jewish War* (ca. 75 C.E.), Smith accused Josephus of writing pro-Pharisaic propaganda anachronistically. Smith proposed that the Romans desired to endorse a group in Palestine to help sustain order and Josephus promoted the Pharisees based upon their growing sway in post-70 C.E. Palestine, implying that the region could not be controlled without their help.⁴ For Smith, the pre-70 C.E.

¹ “Palestinian Judaism in the First Century,” in *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, ed. M. Davis (New York: Seminary Israel Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Harper & Brothers, 1956), 67-81.

² Smith, 72-74; quotes from 74.

³ Smith, 74.

⁴ Smith, 76-77.

Pharisees had actually been one of many small, even insignificant, philosophically oriented Jewish groups in Palestine.⁵

Jacob Neusner supported and expanded Smith's argument in his essay, "Josephus' Pharisees" (1972)⁶ and in his book, *Politics to Piety: The emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (1973). Smith's theory gave Neusner the ability to discard all of Josephus' statements about Pharisaic prominence in *Antiquities*.⁷ As Josephus' only reliable source on the Pharisees, *War* contributes only two pieces of information: (1) the Pharisees had once been engaged politically with the Hasmonean dynasty (*War* 1.107-114), but, since Josephus did not mention them as a group later in this work, they probably did not act as a cohesive political organization in the first century, even though a few individual Pharisees remained politically active (e.g. *War* 2.411); and (2) the Pharisees were a philosophical school with core doctrines (*War* 2.162-166) that were not clearly related to political aspirations.⁸ Neusner suggested their belief that they were the keepers of the true traditions from Moses may have motivated them to act politically at one time, but all their political engagements ceased when Herod slaughtered a large number of them (*Ant.* 17.44).⁹ Neusner posited that after this disaster, Hillel (ca. 50-10 B.C.E), a presumed Pharisaic leader often featured in rabbinic literature, transformed the Pharisees into a loose-knit movement which focused on tithing and ritual purity around the table.¹⁰

Neusner believed that it was this Pharisaic "table-fellowship sect" which one encountered at the heart of the New Testament's portrayal.¹¹ He suggested, however, that this simple picture

⁵ Smith, 78-80. For other arguments that had earlier proposed similar changes in Josephus' Pharisaic portrayal, though with different rationale, see Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 25-34.

⁶ In *Ex Orbe Religionum: Studia Geo Widengren*, vol. 1, eds. C. J. Bleeker et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 224-253. See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 34-35.

⁷ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 65; and "Josephus' Pharisees," 243.

⁸ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 65-66.

⁹ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 66.

¹⁰ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 14.

¹¹ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 79-80.

had been burdened by the New Testament writers due to their post-70 C.E. debates with the Pharisees who were only then beginning to rise to prominence.¹² Neusner found the most beneficial information for his reconstruction from Mark 7:1-13, for its reference to their ritual purity around the table, and from Matthew 23:1-36, for its allusion to the purity of tableware and their tithing practices.¹³

Regarding rabbinic literature, Neusner again concluded that the Pharisees' primary concerns were those of table purity and tithing.¹⁴ These issues, Neusner suggested, were the practices which made them different from other Jewish groups and therefore formed the core of their sectarian movement.¹⁵ Neusner, however, discovered no significant information about the Pharisees' public activities and only sparse references to civic ordinances given by individual Pharisees, and therefore he concluded that the Pharisees had no uniform civic law and no ritual gatherings.¹⁶ Instead, he suggested that the Pharisees practiced, every day in their own homes, the ritual purity the Old Testament prescribed for a temple priest because they believed that God had called them, and every other Jew, to be a nation of priests (cf. Ex. 19:6; Is. 61:6).¹⁷

The dramatic shift between the picture of them in Josephus' *War*, as political activists during the reign of the Hasmoneans, and the picture of them that Neusner perceived in the New Testament and rabbinic literature, as a loose-knit table-fellowship sect, helped convince Neusner that there had been a change of policy under the guidance of Hillel.¹⁸ Neusner believed that the

¹² Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 67-66.

¹³ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 78.

¹⁴ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 83.

¹⁵ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 83, where he defines a sectarian movement as one which has unique practices that differentiate a group from the rest of society as a whole.

¹⁶ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 87, 95-96.

¹⁷ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 83, 87-90.

¹⁸ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 91-92.

Pharisees did not reverse their political and social stances until after the Jewish revolt when circumstances made their views of piety most adaptable to the post-70 situation.¹⁹

In 1978, Ellis Rivkin proposed an interpretation of the Pharisees' social involvement that differed sharply from Neusner's proposal. Ignoring Smith's proposition, Rivkin did not treat Josephus' later works, *Antiquities* and *Life*, as if they gave a different picture of the Pharisees than did *War*.²⁰ For Rivkin, Josephus' more detailed statements in *Antiquities* helped convince him that the "role of the Pharisees loom[ed] large in that segment of history beginning with John Hyrcanus and ending with Salome Alexandra."²¹ Concerning that time, Rivkin wrote:

The Pharisees . . . were a law-making, scholar class capable of stirring up and abetting rebellion against king and High Priest, sanctioning the use of violence to attain power and authority, maneuvering shrewdly to effect a compromise with Salome Alexandra, and liquidating their enemies.²²

Given Josephus' description of them (e.g. *Ant.* 13.408), Rivkin suggested that their primary concern was for the unwritten tradition which they promoted.²³ Rivkin believed that they did not care who was in charge of the government as long as their special laws were followed by Palestinian society.²⁴ For Rivkin, this law-making class of scholars did not change much in the pre-70 C.E. years. Rivkin easily found evidence in the gospels and Acts for the Pharisees' social prominence as teachers of the law, as promoters of the traditions, and as standards for righteousness.²⁵ In rabbinic literature, Rivkin uncovered further evidence to support his reconstruction and expand it so that the priesthood was under the Pharisees' influence.²⁶

¹⁹ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 153-154.

²⁰ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 33.

²¹ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 49.

²² Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 49.

²³ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 70, 74.

²⁴ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 60-61, 64.

²⁵ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 83, 85, 89, 91, 97, 123-124; cf. 102-104.

²⁶ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 176-179; see pp. 77, 87-90 in the current work for more about Rivkin's investigation into rabbinic literature.

According to Rivkin, the Pharisees sat “in the seat of Moses” (cf. Matt. 23:2) and ruled the religious life of Palestine through their oral traditions.²⁷ Rivkin believed that their traditions, which focused on an individual and internal piety which affected the afterlife, usurped the priests’ ability to regulate the Jewish religion.²⁸ Rivkin proposed that the Pharisaic *internalization* of Judaism made it indestructible, giving it an incredible advantage over other forms of the religion, especially in the diaspora and after the destruction of the temple.²⁹

In his 1985, 1990, and 1992 works,³⁰ E. P. Sanders rejected several common assumptions: (1) that the pre-70 Pharisees controlled the religious life of Palestine or its structures (i.e. the temple or the synagogue), (2) that they possessed the power to exclude people from the social and religious community, and (3) that the average Pharisee would have viewed the Jewish majority, the common people often referred to as the *‘am ha ‘arets* (“people of the land”), as outside the covenant.³¹ He believed that the priesthood firmly controlled the temple, its functions, and access to it, making it improbable that six thousand Pharisees (so Josephus, *Ant.* 17.42) could have made the majority of Jews, the *‘am ha ‘arets*, feel like outsiders.³² Sanders suggested that following the stipulations made by the priests, the acceptance of one’s offering, participation in the Day of Atonement, and the like would have sufficed to make the common Jewish person feel like an insider to the Jewish religious life, leaving the Pharisees little room to ostracize the populace.³³ Agreeing with Smith’s thesis on Josephus, Sanders blamed

²⁷ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 252-253, 258-259.

²⁸ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 297-300.

²⁹ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 309.

³⁰ *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), ch 6; *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 1990), chs. 2 and 3; and *Practice & Belief* (1992), chs. 18, 19, and 21.

³¹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 193, 198; and *Practice & Belief*, 389; Sanders especially targets the interpretation of the Pharisees in Jeremias’ *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (1969).

³² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 194, 197-198.

³³ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 193-194, 197; and *Jewish Law*, 240.

some of the confusion on an outlandish portrayal of Pharisaic power in *Antiquities*.³⁴

Furthermore, Sanders disliked the designation “sect” for the Pharisees, preferring the word “party” because it does not imply social separation.³⁵ Sanders suggested that the Pharisees were not a separatist movement because he found no evidence, relying especially on his reading of rabbinic literature, that the Pharisees desired to exclude the common people from worship or study, nor any evidence that the Pharisees had ceased to worship at the temple with other Jews.³⁶ Instead, Sanders posited that the Pharisees’ special concern for purity was a sincere but permeable attempt to avoid “*midras*” impurities, but that they did not view such impurities as *sin*, nor as a reason to dismiss the salvation of the average Jewish person.³⁷ For Sanders, the Pharisees were the largest identifiable group beneath the priests during the pre-70 years, enjoying some popularity and some meager influence, but no direct control.³⁸ Sanders posited that the Pharisees were a unique part of what he called “common Judaism.”³⁹ “Common Judaism,” Sanders argued, was much broader than Pharisaism, not a Pharisaic invention, and not something that common Jews needed to learn from Pharisees.⁴⁰ Sanders maintained, however, that the Pharisees were a group of lay scholars who dedicated themselves to the study and practice of the law and their traditions.⁴¹ Moreover, he suggested that the Pharisees led the reconstruction of Judaism after the Jewish revolt, giving up the title “Pharisee” for the titles of the later rabbis.⁴²

In his 1988 book, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, Anthony Saldarini sought to place the Pharisees into their sociological context by placing the information

³⁴ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 195-196; and *Practice & Belief*, 410-411.

³⁵ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 240-241.

³⁶ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 188-194, 198; and *Jewish Law*, 236-240.

³⁷ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 240-242; and *Practice & Belief*, 428-429, 434-435, 438-440.

³⁸ Sanders, *Practice & Belief*, 412.

³⁹ Sanders, *Practice & Belief*, 451.

⁴⁰ Sanders, *Practice & Belief*, 449-451.

⁴¹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 188; and *Practice & Belief*, 444.

⁴² Sanders, *Practice & Belief*, 412.

offered in the reliable sources in sociological models.⁴³ Saldarini concluded that the Pharisees constituted a social reform movement in Judaism.⁴⁴ While he uses the terms “sect” and “political interest group” for the Pharisees, he argues that one should not understand these designations to mean religiously withdrawn or politically pragmatic, self-interested, or compromising.⁴⁵ Saldarini suggested that they most likely sought “gradual, divinely revealed alterations in the world.”⁴⁶ He did not believe that a person was primarily a Pharisee, but rather that Pharisees were people drawn together by common beliefs, practices, and social endeavors.⁴⁷ For Saldarini, some of the Pharisees had reached the echelons of the governing class, but he argued that they were “best understood as retainers who were literate servants of the governing class and had a program for Jewish society and influence with the people and their patrons.”⁴⁸ As “retainers” or “brokers,” they would have acted as low-ranking officials, judges, educators, or other similar functionaries who would not have possessed independent power, politically or socially, apart from their relationship to their patrons and clients.⁴⁹

The Pharisees only enter Josephus’ account, according to Saldarini, when they affect national stability; otherwise, and most often, Josephus was disinterested in them because they possessed a relatively minor role in society.⁵⁰ Saldarini noted, however, that Josephus’ account does demonstrate that the Pharisees enjoyed some popularity among the people and were capable

⁴³ This paper references *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, 2nd ed. (2001); cf. Saldarini, “Pharisees,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, eds. D. N. Freedman, et al. (New York et al.: Doubleday, 1992): 289-303.

⁴⁴ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 281-282; and “Pharisees,” 302.

⁴⁵ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 287, cf. 281-287.

⁴⁶ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 286.

⁴⁷ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 284; and “Pharisees,” 302.

⁴⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 48, 284.

⁴⁹ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 58, 284, 313; cf. K. C. Hanson and D. E. Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 70-71, 79-80, 194-195.

⁵⁰ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 119; and “Pharisees,” 291-292.

of engaging in political intrigue when the opportunity arose.⁵¹ Saldarini found evidence from rabbinic literature to suggest that the Pharisees possessed strong interests in tithing, ritual purity, and the Sabbath, but little interest in civil law or temple regulations.⁵² In the New Testament, Saldarini acknowledged that there is some evidence that the Pharisees were willing to promote and defend their doctrines against other reform groups, including the Jesus movement.⁵³ The Pharisees, Saldarini argued, represented only one of several small factions in Jewish society making it an oversimplification to treat them as the rulers of the post-70 society, or even as the only faction represented among the rabbis during second or early third century.⁵⁴

In his 2001 essay, “The Pharisees Between ‘Judaisms’ and ‘Common Judaism,’” Roland Deines sought to reverse the fragmentation of Judaism which he considered to be the product of Smith’s efforts.⁵⁵ Deines agreed with Sanders’ attempt to view first-century Judaism as a more unified religion.⁵⁶ From Sanders, Deines adopted the premise that the Pharisees were part of a common form of Judaism and used it as a point of departure for his own reconstruction. Deines, however, was dissatisfied with Sanders’ conclusion that the Pharisees were not significant drivers of common Judaism.⁵⁷ For Deines, Pharisaism represented “*the fundamental and most influential religious movement within Palestinian Judaism between 150 B.C. and A.D. 70.*”⁵⁸ He believed that the Pharisees became the primary framers of “Common Judaism.”⁵⁹ Deines, however, also suggested that the Jewish majority failed to live up to Pharisaic ideals.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, he proposed that the Pharisees accepted the election of the Jewish majority and

⁵¹ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 120.

⁵² Saldarini, “Pharisees,” 302.

⁵³ Saldarini, “Pharisees,” 302.

⁵⁴ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 196-197, 289.

⁵⁵ Deines, 443-451.

⁵⁶ Deines, 453.

⁵⁷ Deines, 447, 454.

⁵⁸ Deines, 503; italics his.

⁵⁹ Deines, 503-504.

⁶⁰ Deines, 501-502.

sought the reformation of Jewish society through individual participation.⁶¹ Deines argued that the Pharisees were not separatists, but rather saw themselves more as a “sanctifying remnant,” one which he compares to leaven in dough.⁶² Pharisaic Judaism, according to Deines, was the heart and soul of typical Judaism in the first century, and, in their place of prestige, they were able to draw the boundaries which defined insiders from outsiders.⁶³

The essential points of these reconstructions will be examined over the course of this paper. Important to the study of the Pharisees is Josephus’ attitude toward them and his purpose in writing about them. It is of particular interest to this study to determine whether or not he was intending to promote them to the Romans in his later works as Smith and Neusner suggest, and Sanders seems to accept. Also of importance is the New Testament’s portrayal of the Pharisees’ prestige and their conflicts with the Jesus movement which is so important to Rivkin’s reconstruction. In light of Neusner’s claim, it is beneficial to investigate whether or not such a portrayal is indicative of a post-70’s social situation. In light of Sanders’ concerns, it is of interest to explore the Pharisees’ relationship to the priesthood. The rabbis’ relationship to the Pharisees is of considerable importance as well. Smith, Neusner, Rivkin, and Sanders all suggest that the Pharisees and the rabbis are directly related. Deines seems to be trying to support such a connection by giving them such an enormous role in society during the pre-70 years. Saldarini’s position, in contrast, seems somewhat critical of such an equation. For all these reconstructions, and in all three sources, it is important to determine what the original authors were intending to do by adding the Pharisees to their documents. These issues will be addressed as possible while exploring the sources themselves. Then, in the final chapter, there will be an evaluation of these reconstructions in light of findings.

⁶¹ Deines, 502.

⁶² Deines, 502.

⁶³ Deines, 503.

CHAPTER THREE

JOSEPHUS' PHARISEES

A. Flavius Josephus and His Purpose for His Pharisees

Josephus was a member of the Jewish aristocracy. He claimed to be a Hebrew priest (*War* 1.3; *Life* 1), a descendant of high priests (*Life* 2-4), and a descendant of Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean (*Ant.* 16.187; 20.266; *Life* 2-6). The connection Josephus saw between himself and the Hasmonean house was apparently strong enough that he named his eldest son Hyrcanus (*Life* 5).¹ He was educated as a priest (*Life* 8-9), and believed that his priestly status gave him the authority to interpret with accuracy the customs which Moses handed down to the priests (e.g. *Ag. Ap.* 2.184-187).² During the first-century Jewish revolt (ca. 66-70 C.E.), Josephus had been given command of Galilee (*War* 2.568), again suggesting that he held status among the elite of Jewish society. After he was captured by the Romans (*War* 3.392), he became attached to the Flavian house, serving the emperors Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian (*Life* 422-423, 428-429).

Four of Josephus' works survived for posterity: *Jewish War* (ca. 75 C.E.), *Antiquities of the Jews* (ca. 90), *Life* (ca. 100), and *Against Apion* (ca. 100). Josephus' *War* was preceded by at least one other work, now lost, which recounted the events of the Jewish revolt in Aramaic and seems to have served as a template for his later Greek account (*War* 1.3, 6). Three of his four extant works contain references to the Pharisees: *War*, *Antiquities*, and *Life*.

¹ Cf. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 225.

² Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 92-95, and "Priesthood in Josephus and the 'Pharisaic Revolution,'" *JBL* 107 no. 4 (1988): 658-659 argues this point well.

Josephus (b. 37 C.E.; *Life* 5) was a contemporary of the first-century Pharisees and would have had firsthand contact with them (cf. *Life* 10-12, 21, 191-192, 196-332 passim). Josephus, however, does not intend to record a history of the Pharisees.³ Compared to the bulk of his work, the Pharisees' appearances are relatively brief, and any information he does offer seems tied into his larger political-historical and apologetic work.⁴

According to Smith and Neusner, Josephus' political-historical purposes prompted him to promote the Pharisees to the Romans in his later works. This is allegation, however, has not gone unchallenged. In 1983, Daniel R. Schwartz opposed the Smith-Neusner interpretation.⁵ Schwartz argued that Josephus' portrayal of the Pharisees in *Antiquities* could not have been intended to raise Roman support for the Pharisees because those very passages also offer a negative picture of the group (13.288, 401; 17.41-45).⁶ Schwartz posited that Josephus adopted these negative passages with little to no revision from another source, probably Nicolaus of Damascus, whom Josephus named as a source (e.g. *Ant.* 13.250; 14.9).⁷ As an alternative view to that of Smith and Neusner, Schwartz suggested that *Antiquities* and *Life* actually give a more accurate picture of the Pharisees than does *War*. According to Schwartz, Josephus had suppressed the Pharisees' social involvement in *War* because he was trying to protect the image of the Pharisees in the delicate years immediately after the rebellion.⁸ For Schwartz, only after

³ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 33; and Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 79.

⁴ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 85.

⁵ "Josephus and Nicolaus on the Pharisees," *JSJ* 14 n. 2 (1983): 157-171.

⁶ Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 167-168.

⁷ See Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 158, 162; Schwartz believed that Josephus was a Pharisee because of *Life* 12, and therefore did not believe that Josephus would have composed the negative passages himself. Cf. Mason and his critique of Schwartz in *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 37-38.

⁸ Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 169-170, writes that Josephus removed the "damaging pieces of information which connect the Pharisees with rebels," and Schwartz maintains this despite the negative depiction of the Pharisees in *War* 1.107-114.

some of the dust had settled in Palestine did Josephus become “less cautious” about the Pharisees’ influence and involvement.⁹

Steve Mason (2001) agreed with Schwartz and his assessment about the negativity in some of Josephus’ passages about the Pharisees.¹⁰ Mason suggested, however, that those negative passages come from Josephus’ own hand and reflect his own attitude toward the Pharisees.¹¹ These issues will be considered as this chapter explores Josephus’ Pharisees.

B. Josephus’ Sketch of the Pharisees

1. The Jewish War

The Pharisees make their first appearance in *War* 1.110-114, where Josephus recounts the reign of Alexandra Salome (ca. 76-67 B.C.E.).¹² Alexandra had just taken control of the kingdom by the request of her husband, Alexander Janneus (ca. 103-76 B.C.E.; 1.107). According to Josephus, Alexander Janneus’ reign was politically troubled. Military campaigns marked his 27 year career, even waging war against his own kingdom because “the Jewish populace rose in revolt against him” (1.87-88; Thackeray, LCL). Alexander managed to regain an uneasy control of the nation by crucifying 800 men and killing their wives and children before their eyes (1.97-98). This action caused many political antagonists to flee the country in fear (1.98). After this disastrous reign, Josephus suggests that Alexander passed the kingdom to his wife, Alexandra, because he had reason to believe that the people would obey her. Alexander knew that she had the affections of the people due to her “lack of brutality” and her “opposition to his crimes”

⁹ Schwartz, “Josephus and Nicolaus,” 169.

¹⁰ *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 373-375.

¹¹ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 372-373.

¹² Sievers (“Hasmoneans,” in *DNTB*, eds. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter [Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000], 440), Saldarini (*Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 89), and Stemberger (7) agree upon this date, but H. St. J. Thackeray (in Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 2 [Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann LTD, 1927], 53) puts the date at 78-69 B.C.E. The former will be accepted for the remainder of this work.

(1.107; Thackeray, LCL). It would seem that giving the docile Alexandra the kingdom was Alexander's last attempt to make peace between his house and the nation.

Upon taking the kingdom from her deceased husband, Josephus reports that Alexandra gave her eldest son, Hyrcanus II, the position of high priest because he was unconcerned with public affairs (1.109). She kept a second son, Aristobulus, in "private life" because he was "a hot-head" (1.109; Thackeray, LCL). Josephus records that Alexandra herself had a reputation (δόξα) of piety which enabled her to hold "firmly... the reins of government" (Thackeray, LCL), and she discharged anyone from public office who committed sacrilege against the laws (1.108). Thus Josephus introduces Alexandra's reign as one of reconciliation, and one of great promise.

Into this picture, Josephus ushers the Pharisees. He introduces them as "growing up around her into power" (παραφύονται . . . αὐτῆς εἰς τὴν ἐξουσίαν; 1.110).¹³ Thackeray notes that the word παραφύομαι might carry the connotation of growing as "suckers round a tree."¹⁴ The likelihood that this image is intended to be negative is increased when Josephus then calls the Pharisees "a gang of Jews" (σύνταγμά . . . Ἰουδαίων; 1.110).¹⁵ Mason's research shows that Josephus used the term σύνταγμα 16 times in all. Of the remaining 15 occurrences, it is used pejoratively 13 times (e.g. *War* 1.495; 2.107, 172, 290), especially when attached to a group of people (e.g. *War* 1.568; 4.135, 509, 513, 558; *Ant.* 20.161; *Life* 106).¹⁶

The negativity of the account continues as Josephus further describes them as "taking advantage of an ingenuous woman," holding the "enjoyments of royal authority" as their own while leaving all the expenses and burdens of it to Alexandra (1.111; Thackeray, LCL). The

¹³ Translation mine; the translation of παραφύομαι was derived from the discussion of the word by Thackeray in Josephus, *Jewish War, Books 1-3*, trans. Thackeray, LCL (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann LTD, 1927), 53; and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 84.

¹⁴ Thackeray in the LCL translation of Josephus, *Jewish War, Books 1-3*, 53.

¹⁵ Translation mine; the word "gang" was chosen because of its potential in English to carry negativity. This selection was intended to reflect Josephus' negative use of the word σύνταγμα.

¹⁶ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 84-85.

Pharisees pressure Alexandra to punish the men whom they presumed were responsible for the crucifixion of the 800 men in Alexander's reign (1.113). This act of retribution appears to displease the author, who takes time to lament the execution of one Diogenes (1.113a). Alexandra's capitulation is attributed to her religious superstitions which the Pharisees handily exploit (1.13b). Josephus summarizes the situation: "if she ruled the nation, the Pharisees ruled her" (1.112; Thackeray, LCL).

Due to the negative references about the Pharisees' political influence in this account, Smith and Schwartz both suggest that Josephus took this pericope from Nicolaus of Damascus, Herod's historian, whom Josephus elsewhere lists as a source (e.g. *Ant.* 13.250; 14.9).¹⁷ Mason suggests, however, that *War* 1.110-114 is best understood as Josephus' own reshaping of Nicolaus of Damascus' narrative.¹⁸ Mason offers five reasons for his conclusion, three of which will be mentioned here. First, *War* 1.110-114 resembles Josephus' descriptions of the Pharisees in *War* 2.162 and *Life* 191, which Josephus probably wrote without a source. Second, this passage represents one of the ten times that Josephus combines δοκέω with ἀκρίβεια to describe a group or individual in his works, many of which could not be attributed to a source. Finally, the key words which define the Pharisees in this passage (ἀκρίβεια, εὐσέβεια, νόμοι) are characteristic of Josephus' own vocabulary.¹⁹

Mason's observations make it fairly certain that Josephus has originated at least one of the statements in this pericope, probably from his own experience. Josephus writes that the Pharisees are "considered more pious than others and more accurate in explaining the laws"

¹⁷ Smith, 75; Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 170.

¹⁸ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 113; cf. Stemberger, 8.

¹⁹ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 113; the other two reasons are Josephus' personal experience with Pharisees, and his ability to shape narratives elsewhere (cf. Mason's ch. 2, *ibid.*, on this latter point).

(δοκοῦν εὐσεβέστερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοὺς νόμους ἀκριβέστερον ἀφηγεῖσθαι).²⁰ Often, scholars have taken this statement as a positive statement about the Pharisees.²¹ Mason points out, however, that the entire mood of this statement hangs on the verb “considered” (δοκέω).²² The verb δοκέω can be translated as “*think, believe, suppose, consider*” or “*seem, be recognized as*.”²³ Δοκέω does not guarantee the validity of the postulation, nor necessarily the agreement of the author, Josephus.²⁴ Josephus often mentions the δοξα (reputation) of one of his historical subjects and either validates it or invalidates it by the addition of subsequent material.²⁵ If Mason is correct, Josephus has already done this with Alexander Janneus in *War* 1.85ff. There, Alexander had “apparent [δόκουντα] moderation of character” (Thackeray, LCL), but his entire reign was filled with violence, bloodshed, and even impiety (1.85-106).²⁶ Mason suggests that Josephus is making the same accusation in *War* 1.10-114 about the Pharisees’ reputation: what is considered true is not always the case.²⁷

Saldarini also argues that Josephus purposely perpetuated the negativity of this account. Because Josephus was a member of the governing class, Saldarini believes that he was most concerned with the balance of power in *War* 1.110-114 and how the authorities of Alexandra’s reign were keeping the peace of the nation.²⁸ Whatever the reason for Josephus’ negative account, the pericope helps establish that Josephus, even when writing *War*, believed that the

²⁰ Translation mine.

²¹ E.g. Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 51-52; and Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 48-49.

²² Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 106-110.

²³ BDAG (2000), 254-255; italics from source; cf. Liddell & Scott (1996), 442-443: “*expect... think suppose, imagine..., seem*”; italics from source.

²⁴ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 110-111.

²⁵ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 111-112.

²⁶ Cf. *Ag. Ap.* 1.18, 67.

²⁷ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 111, where he also notes that comparing what is “real” to what is “seemingly real” was a common theme in Hellenistic moral philosophy around Josephus’ time. Mason also believes that Josephus has made a contrast between what he considers the fictitious piety of the Pharisees and the authentic but gullible piety of Alexandra.

²⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 91-92 n. 34; cf. A. Guttmann, *Rabbinic Judaism in the Making: A Chapter in the History of the Halakhah from Ezra to Judah I*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 128.

Pharisees had been involved in the politics of the Hasmonean dynasty. Furthermore, since Josephus' statement about the Pharisees' reputation most probably comes from Josephus' own hand, it helps establish that he believed they enjoyed a level of popularity during his lifetime.

The Pharisees appear next in *War* 1.571. In this brief account on the Pharisees, Herod's sister-in-law is accused of rewarding the Pharisees with money because they were causing Herod trouble. Josephus does not elaborate on this until his later account in *Antiquities* 17.42. Here, however, it is noteworthy that Josephus has again alluded to the Pharisees as political troublemakers.

War 2.119-166 contains the next reference to the Pharisees. There, Josephus introduces his readers to the three *legitimate* "schools of thought" (αἱρέσεις) or "philosophies" (φιλοσοφίαι) in Judaism.²⁹ Josephus' description of these legitimate schools comes on the heels of his description of what he claims is a newly developed, radical school based on the teachings of Judas the Galilean (2.118). In Josephus' narrative, Judas' philosophy began after Caesar Augustus dismissed Herod's son, Archelaus (ca. 4 B.C.E.-6 C.E.), and replaced him with a Roman procurator, Coponius (ca. 6-9 C.E.; 2.117).³⁰ Judas instigated a revolt, challenging any Jew who paid taxes or otherwise obeyed the Romans. According to Josephus, Judas taught that the Jews should not tolerate "mortal masters" because they had "God for their lord" (2.118; Thackeray, LCL). Josephus wanted to make it clear to his Roman readership that the way of thought (αἵρεσις) of this sophist (σοφιστής) had nothing in common with the *mainstream* forms of Judaism (2.118).³¹

²⁹ For a discussion on the proper translation and understanding of αἱρέσεις, see Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 123-127; and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 125-129.

³⁰ Archelaus ruled over Judea, Idumea, and Samaria; *War* 2.97.

³¹ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 121.

The bulk of this passage is spent on the Essenes (2.119b-161). The Sadducees and the Pharisees are squeezed into a disproportionately small section at the end, which they share through a few contrasting statements (2.162-166). It appears that Josephus has elevated the Essenes to help him in the task of separating mainstream Jews from the anti-Roman rebels.³² Their ascetic lifestyle and strict piety make the Essenes a prime example of acceptable Judaism for Josephus to flaunt before his readership.

When Josephus finally gets to the Pharisees and Sadducees, he has three main points to discuss: fate (2.162b-163a; 164-165a); resurrection (2.163b, 165b); and disposition to community (2.166). Josephus claims that the Sadducees: as to fate, believe all things are in the hands of people; as to resurrection, believe that there is no afterlife; and as to disposition, treat one another and outsiders rudely. In contrast, he claims that the Pharisees believe that fate controls everything (εἰμαρμένη τε καὶ θεῶ προσάπτουσι πάντα) and yet still contend that, for the most part, people make their own choices with fate's help (βοηθεῖν δὲ εἰς ἕκαστον καὶ τὴν εἰμαρμένην); as to resurrection, they believe that a good person receives a new body but a bad person receives eternal punishment; and as to disposition, they are friendly and “cultivate harmonious relationships in the community” (Thackeray, LCL).

Josephus' portrayal of the Pharisees in this section seems more positive than his previous entries. They certainly fare better here than do the Sadducees. His preference for the Pharisees, however, may be the result of his own philosophical disagreement with the Sadducees on the issues of fate and resurrection.³³ Josephus believes in fate (cf. *War* 5.572; 6.84, 89, 107-110,

³² Cf. *War* 1.10: “the populace who were at the mercy of the revolutionaries” (Thackeray, LCL). See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 121-122.

³³ This, of course, assumes that Josephus actually portrayed the philosophical views on fate and resurrection with some level of accuracy, or at least accuracy from Josephus point of view. The possibility remains

267, 314; *Ant.* 8.419; *Ag. Ap.* 2.180) and in some kind of resurrection (cf. *War* 2.157, 218; 3.372, 374), though it is not clear as to whether he would align himself more with the Essenes or the Pharisees on these points.³⁴ The Essenes, however, overshadow the Pharisees and take center stage in Josephus' description of conventional Judaism in *War*.

Despite Josephus' lavish attention on the Essenes, he mentions that the Pharisees are "considered the most accurate interpreters of the customs, and are leading (off) the foremost school" (οἱ μετ' ἀκριβείας δοκοῦντες ἐξηγεῖσθαι τὰ νόμιμα καὶ τὴν πρώτην ἀπάγοντες αἵρεσιν; 2.162a).³⁵ This is the second time that Josephus has referred to the Pharisees' reputation for accuracy (cf. *War* 1.110). In coupling this statement with the suggestion that they are the πρώτην (first/chief/foremost/principle/earliest) αἵρεσιν (way of thought/philosophy/school/sect),³⁶ Josephus has made another allusion to the general popularity of the Pharisees.³⁷ The

that he placed the groups into invented philosophical categories (especially related to fate and free will) based upon his own biases. Cf. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 155.

³⁴ See *War* 2.154 for the Essenes' belief in the afterlife. For a comparison between the beliefs of Josephus and the groups (as Josephus portrays them) on fate and afterlife, see Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 140-142 (fate), 158-160 (afterlife).

³⁵ Translation mine; but it has been heavily influenced by Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 96-106, 124, 128-132; the word νόμιμος has been translated "customs" in line with Mason's study which reveals that Josephus used various forms of νόμος interchangeably to refer to the general overarching customs of a people group (cf. *War* 1.653-654, 2.6110); the word ἀπάγοντες (from ἀπάγω) has been translated as "leading (off)" in an attempt to retain the possibility of the original meaning of "leading off" or "leading away." See p. 25 in the current work.

³⁶ However, the word πρώτη could also mean "early" or "earliest." Stemberger, 8, simply notes two possibilities (temporal vs. esteem) and does not attempt to resolve the issue. Mason, 128-132, is more bold: while he acknowledges three possibilities (temporal vs. esteem vs. literary placement), he decides the issue based on his interpretation of the combination of the words πρώτην and ἀπάγοντες. The method Mason employs, however, may be slightly flawed in that he leans upon the present tense participle ἀπάγοντες, suggesting that it implies that the Pharisees activity would be contemporary with Josephus' time (130). However, Aktionsart tense theory in the Greek language has since been placed in a category of suspicion if not scrapped entirely; see S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 27-28. Regardless of this potential problem, it is still likely that Josephus is referring to their prominence in some fashion. (1) It seems quite unlikely that Josephus would be referring to them as "the first school I mentioned" because he has already drawn attention to them in that manner only twelve words earlier. (2) If Josephus is intending to speak historically of their beginnings, it would stand to reason that the earliest school might also hold the most clout, a possibility which is only strengthened by Josephus' continual reference to the Pharisees reputation for accuracy, even present in the same sentence (2.162) as this clause. The implication of a temporal reference, therefore, would probably be the same as one of prominence. It is thus a safer assumption to take the word πρώτη as referring to esteem rather than time.

³⁷ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 129-130, 175; and Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 165.

additional claim that they are friendly among themselves and in the community (2.166) seems to suggest that Josephus does not view them as an exclusive sectarian group. Rather, he seems to envision them with ties to the populace that were somewhat fluid, and with a manner more sociable than the Sadducees.³⁸ Josephus is laying out the qualities of a popular movement.

While the overall picture of the Pharisees in this pericope is relatively positive, Josephus' choice of the words τὴν πρώτην ἀπάγοντες αἵρεσιν in 2.262a may betray some personal animosity toward the group. The participle ἀπάγοντες and the negative connotations it may inflict upon this text have caused translators some consternation.³⁹ Its root, ἀπάγω, is normally translated as "lead away" (sometimes as a prisoner, or to an execution), or, if in the passive, as "misled" or "carried away."⁴⁰ Whiston translates the word as "introduce" and Thackeray translates it as simply "leading." The possibility exists, however, that Josephus disapproves of the Pharisees reputation and their popularity. Mason proposes that Josephus focused negative feelings on the Pharisees' reputation for accuracy with the Jewish laws because, as a priest, Josephus believed legal accuracy resided with the priestly class.⁴¹ Mason posits that Josephus' negativity is apparent in his use of ἀπάγοντες, and he favors a translation that reflects the natural interpretation of the word (e.g. "leading astray the foremost school of thought among the Jews").⁴² Nonetheless, even if Josephus intended some hostility toward the Pharisees with the statement, it still reveals that Josephus believed that their movement was a well-respected and well-established school among the Jewish populace.

³⁸ See Stemberger, 9.

³⁹ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 131-132.

⁴⁰ BDAG (2000), 95.

⁴¹ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 92-95, 373; and also "Priesthood in Josephus," 658-659.

⁴² Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 131-132; he suggests that other translators have been unwilling to translate the phrase this way because it has most often been assumed that Josephus had Pharisaic ties and sympathies (cf. *Life* 12b), an assumption Mason does not make.

The Pharisees make their final appearance in Josephus' *The Jewish War* on the eve of a full-blown revolt against Rome (2.411). Although conflicts with the Roman procurator, Gessius Florus (64-66 C.E.), had already taken place, Josephus suggests that the real war with Rome did not commence until Eleazar, son of the high priest (Ananias), urged the priests to stop accepting sacrifices from foreigners and to stop offering sacrifices on behalf of Caesar (2.409). In an effort to stop the unfolding events, "those in power met with the chief priests and with the notable Pharisees" to discuss their options (2.411).⁴³ In doing this, Josephus places some of the Pharisees within the realms of political aristocracy. He qualifies that these are "the notables" (τοῖς . . . γνωρίμοις) from among the group, suggesting that some Pharisees held a higher social position than others.⁴⁴

The Pharisees, however, are absent from specific discussion later in the passage. Some undesigned people from among the group in 2.411 plead with the people to allow the sacrifices of foreigners as had their Jewish forefathers (2.412-416). These men could be Pharisees, but if so, Josephus does not make that clear. They could just as easily be the "ones in power." In 2.417, after these undesigned men have argued their case, Josephus writes that they then brought out the priests to prove their argument. Josephus writes of the priests that they had "expertise from the fathers" (ἐμπείρους τῶν πατρίων). Unlike the Pharisees of 1.110 and 2.162, Josephus does not offer a possible dilution this claim by referring to their reputation. He simply states that these *priests were experts* and their testimony concerning the traditions of the Jewish forefathers is given as the final word in this attempt to curb the rebellion. The Pharisees from

⁴³ Translation mine.

⁴⁴ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 61, attaches the Pharisees to οἱ δυνατοί, but this seems incorrect because *War* 2.411a reads συνελθόντες . . . οἱ δυνατοὶ τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσιν εἰς ταὐτό καὶ τοῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων γνωρίμοις; it does not read: συνελθόντες . . . οἱ δυνατοὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσιν εἰς ταὐτό καὶ τοῖς γνωρίμοις; or even συνελθόντες . . . οἱ δυνατοὶ τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσιν εἰς ταὐτό καὶ τοῖς δυνατοῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων γνωρίμοις.

2.411, if they speak at all, are not considered the final authority in Josephus' account. The priests receive this honor.⁴⁵

The placement of the Pharisees in this scene deserves further attention. Why does Josephus include them at all? Why does he not mention the Sadducees or the Essenes? While it could be a simple and benign historical detail, it may be that Josephus wanted to include the Pharisees for another reason. Josephus has previously alluded that the Pharisees lead a popular school of thought (*War* 1.110; 2.162, 166), and he has elsewhere implicated them in seditious activities (*War* 1.110-114; 1.571). By referencing them here, he may be making a special effort to separate them from the rebellious faction which started the Jewish revolt (cf. *War* 2.118-166), thus separating a large portion of the population as well.⁴⁶ It is also possible, and perhaps more probable, that he references them here to highlight the state of anarchy which preceded the revolt, when both the priestly experts and the popular Pharisaic leaders were ignored.⁴⁷

In summary, Josephus' *War* gives a rather ambivalent picture of the Pharisees. They are political troublemakers in two of Josephus' accounts (1.110-114; 1.571). They are a prominent and legitimate philosophical school, but Josephus celebrates them less than the Essenes, and only offers them praise in conjunction with the Sadducees whom Josephus dislikes. Josephus gives a nod to their importance when he mentions that some of them try to help quell the Jewish revolt, but, even then, their significance is crowded out by the priests. Some evidence exists to suggest that Josephus felt animosity toward the Pharisees' reputation among the people (1.110; 2.162a).

⁴⁵ For Josephus' view on priestly authority over interpretation, see again Mason, "Priesthood in Josephus," 658-659, and *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 92-95.

⁴⁶ Cf. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 67, 81, who mentions that Josephus wished to maintain the innocence of the common Jewish people and blame only a few rebellious tyrants for the revolt against Rome.

⁴⁷ See also the discussion on *Life* 21 in the current work, p. 40.

2. *Antiquities of the Jews*

The first reference to the Pharisees in *Antiquities* (13.171-173) has puzzled interpreters.⁴⁸

It is an exposition of the three Jewish schools' positions on fate and free will, strangely wedged into a narrative which otherwise describes the military history of Jonathan, the Hasmonean high priest (ca. 153/152-143/142 B.C.E.). The phrase "at this time" (κατὰ . . . τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον) certainly seems to indicate that Josephus believed that the Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees were active in the time of Jonathan, but he may have been less interested in establishing a date for the different philosophical schools, and more interested in drawing his readers' attention to some aspect of providence which he sees in the narrative.⁴⁹ Whatever his reason for adding this pericope may have been, he seems more interested in the philosophical positions on fate and free will than in the schools themselves.⁵⁰ While minor differences in the wording of the Pharisees' philosophical stance on fate and free will exist when comparing this account to the one in *War* 2.162-163, it is basically the same: they have some kind of mixture over the ideas of fate and free

⁴⁸ Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 161-162, writes, "As it stands, the function of this passage is incomprehensible," and concludes that Josephus must have taken the short insertion (fit between Josephus paraphrase of 1 Macc. 12:23 and 24) from Nicolaus of Damascus, who would have made a relevant connection to the narrative, one that Josephus omitted, probably because it was somehow anti-Hasmonean; Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 34-35, also assumes that Josephus has inserted material from another source, probably because he was compelled to do so because of a chronological connection; G. H. Moore, "Fate and Free Will in the Jewish Philosophies According to Josephus," *HTR* 22 (1929): 371-372, also proposes that Josephus was making a chronological connection, dating the three schools to around 150 B.C.E.; and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 221, proposes that Josephus wrote the passage himself and used it to make apologetic point that Judaism, like Greco-Roman philosophy had differing thoughts on the metaphysical questions of fate and free will, and that the Jewish schools of thought were ancient.

⁴⁹ Josephus may have been awed by the hand of fate in the reconciliation of the Jewish people and Lacedemonians, who are also descendents of Abraham according to the narrative (see *Ant.* 12.225-227 and 13.165-170). He may have been reflecting on the peace which made that reconciliation possible, or the ties Jonathan made with Rome at that time (*Ant.* 13.169). It is also possible that he was preparing his readers for something coming up in the narrative, such as Jonathan's good fortune in repelling Demetrius' increased army without any conflict and Demetrius' subsequent capture (13.174-186).

⁵⁰ Cf. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 203, 211.

will (*Ant.* 13.172).⁵¹ Josephus' Sadducees and Essenes hold polarized positions making the Pharisees' stance the middle ground.⁵²

The Pharisees materialize next in *Antiquities* 13.288-298, during the reign of John Hyrcanus (ca. 135/134-104 B.C.E.), who simultaneously held the offices of king and high priest. This new material, which had not appeared in his account of Hyrcanus in *War* 1.54-69, describes a falling-out that took place between Hyrcanus and the Pharisees. Josephus begins the pericope by saying that the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, were jealous of Hyrcanus' success (*Ant.* 13.288a; cf. *War* 1.67). He continues by saying that the Pharisees held so much influence over the people that whenever they said something against a king or a high priest, their words were believed (13.288b). Making jealousy their motive and slander their means, Josephus has placed a negative slant on the Pharisees going into the story.⁵³ Suddenly, however, his tone changes to a more neutral one as he records how Hyrcanus, once a beloved disciple of the Pharisees (13.289a), split with them over the personal insult of one man (13.289b-296a).⁵⁴ The sudden change in tone between Josephus' introductory remarks and the feast scene gives a strong indication that Josephus incorporated a different source into his work.⁵⁵ It is usually presumed that Nicolaus of Damascus was Josephus' source for *War* 1.67-68, which would also make him the source for *Antiquities* 13.288a and 13.299.⁵⁶ The account of the feast (13.289-296), comes

⁵¹ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 204-206.

⁵² Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 203-204.

⁵³ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 225-227.

⁵⁴ Josephus reports that, at a feast, when the Pharisees were in a good mood, Hyrcanus asked them to correct him any wrongdoing so that he might better serve God (13.289b-290a). All but one of the Pharisees responded favorably to him (13.290b). The Pharisaic dissenter, named Eleazar, challenged Hyrcanus' right to be the high priest on the basis that his mother had been a captive of Antiochus Epiphanes (13.292). Josephus writes that the accusation was false and that the remaining Pharisees and Hyrcanus are all angered by it (12.292b). The meddling of a Sadducee named Jonathan, however, convinced Hyrcanus that the Pharisees all agreed with Eleazar because they did not believe that such an insult warranted the death penalty (13.293-295).

⁵⁵ See Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 158-159; and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 216-227.

⁵⁶ Cf. Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 159, who attributes all of *Ant.* 13.288 to Nicolaus of Damascus and believes that Josephus omitted the reference to the Pharisees (appearing in *Ant.* 13.288b) in his *War* account.

from a Jewish source, but it is not the direct work of Josephus' hand, evidenced by vocabulary and style.⁵⁷ Mason, by evaluating the composition, convincingly argues that Josephus contributed 13.288b, the negative introduction for the Pharisees, and 13.297-298, the discussion of their unbiblical customs.⁵⁸ Both of these Josephan creations contain references to the Pharisees' popularity among the Jewish masses, as does the end of 13.296, his Jewish source.

Josephus records that when Hyrcanus broke his association with the Pharisees, he also banned certain Pharisaic laws from public observance (13.293-296a). Josephus reports that, due to the Pharisees' popularity, this philosophical split caused strife between the people and the Hasmonean house for generations (13.296b).⁵⁹ Then, in *Antiquities* 13.297-298, Josephus adds a short commentary about the Pharisaic laws that Hyrcanus repealed. He writes that the Pharisees possessed some customs which were "not recorded in Moses" (οὐκ ἀναγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς Μωυσέως; 13.297a), but which had been derived "from the traditions of the fathers" (τὰ δ' ἐκ παραδόσεως τῶν πατέρων; 13.297b).⁶⁰ Often, it has been assumed that these traditions which are not found in "Moses" refer to the "Oral Torah" of rabbinic literature.⁶¹ This assumption is

⁵⁷ So Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 219-221, who points out that, whereas Josephus usually uses the word δίκαιος in the general Hellenistic sense of "justice," in this passage it is used in the Jewish covenantal sense of pleasing God through the fulfillment of his law (13.289); and δίκαιος is also used in conjunction with ὁδός in a way that reflects the Jewish thought of obedience to God's law as a "righteous path," paralleling the biblical usages of ḥd in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. Ex. 18:20; Deut. 5:23; 1 Sam. 12:23; Ps. 119:1-133; Prov. 16:7; Jer. 7:38). Also, rabbinic literature contains a (somewhat) parallel account of the feast (*b. Qid.* 66a). However, the source of the rabbinic version is likewise unknown. It could have been inspired by Josephus' account or by a common source. Interestingly, the rabbinic version does not make Hyrcanus I the subject of the story, but rather Alexander Jannaeus. It mentions Eleazar, but it does not mention the Pharisees by name.

⁵⁸ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 222-227.

⁵⁹ This connection may offer the key to the addition of this material. *Ant.* 13.289-298 may have given Josephus a good way of explaining how the later Hasmonean house came into conflict with the Pharisaic group, and the trouble with the Pharisaic group may have helped him explain the Hasmoneans' trouble with the Jewish people in general.

⁶⁰ Translation mine.

⁶¹ E.g. Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 23-24, 28, 41-43, 72-74; and J. M. Baumgarten, "The Unwritten Law in the Pre-Rabbinic Period," *JSJ* 3 (1972): 7-8, 12-14.

possible, but also somewhat fragile.⁶² The form of these Pharisaic traditions is undesignated by Josephus. They are “not recorded in Moses,” but that does not exclude the possibility that they are written elsewhere.

Josephus suggests that the Jewish masses approved of these non-Mosaic customs (*Ant.* 13.296, 298b), and that the Sadducees were unpopular because they rejected them (13.298a). If true, Josephus does not make it clear whether the Pharisees had converted the masses to their non-Mosaic customs, or whether the Jewish masses already had special customs which the Pharisees subsequently championed. Nor is it clear that the Pharisees were the only group that held extra-Mosaic customs in Josephus’ mind.⁶³ Josephus’ primary purpose in recording the existence of these non-Mosaic laws was to explain the conflict that arose for the Hasmonean house when Hyrcanus I exchanged his Pharisaic allegiance for a Sadducean one.

Smith and Neusner view *Antiquities* 13.288-298, with its several references to the Pharisees’ influence and popularity, as pro-Pharisaic propaganda, but the hostility that Josephus weaves into the passage toward the Pharisees makes that possibility very unlikely.⁶⁴ This text is pro-Hyrcanus, which one might expect from the Hasmonean descendant, Josephus (cf. *Life* 1-6).⁶⁵ Apparently, Josephus vilified the Pharisees in this account to protect Hyrcanus’ reputation.

In *Antiquities* 13.400-432, Josephus revisits the state of affairs when Alexander Janneus bequeathed his throne to his wife, Alexandra Salome (cf. *War* 1.107-114). In his new edition, Josephus records that Alexander told his wife, Alexandra, to offer some of her authority to the Pharisees so that her reign would be peaceful (*Ant.* 13.400-401). Josephus writes:

⁶² See Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 2:163; and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 238-243.

⁶³ Given that both the Essenes (*War* 2.154-155) and Josephus as a priest (*War* 3.372-375) believed in an afterlife, something that the Sadducees denied, it would seem premature to suggest that the Pharisees were the only group that possessed extra-biblical traditions; cf. the priests of *War* 2.417ff who promote the “traditions of the fathers.”

⁶⁴ Schwartz, “Josephus and Nicolaus,” 158.

⁶⁵ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 225, 227.

These men, he assured her, had so much influence with their fellow-Jews that they could injure those whom they hated and help those to whom they were friendly ; for they had the complete confidence of the masses when they spoke harshly of any person, even when they did so out of envy ; and he himself, he added, had come into conflict with the nation because these men had been badly treated by him. (13.401b-402; Marcus, LCL)

Even though Alexander confesses treating the Pharisees badly, this passage does not offer a positive picture of them. Josephus again attributes their power to their popularity, but, as with Hyrcanus I, adds that their actions can be governed by envy (φθονέω; cf. *Ant.* 13.288a).

In *Antiquities* 13.405-413 Alexandra offers power to the Pharisees, as her husband requested, and reinstates the Pharisaic customs which Hyrcanus I had abolished. Since they have regained the place of privilege, they encourage the masses to give Alexander a large funeral (13.407), just as Alexander had predicted (13.403-404). They then, as in *War* 1.110-114, go about seeking to avenge all of the deaths of the 800 victims of crucifixion (*Ant.* 13.410-413). Concerning this, Josephus writes that “throughout the entire country there was quiet except for the Pharisees” (13.410; Marcus, LCL). This theme continues in Josephus’ final critique on the reign of Alexandra (13.430-432). Josephus writes that, while her foreign policy was outstanding (13.431a, 432b), her domestic leadership caused a rift that did not pass with her death (13.431b-432a). Her domestic policies (which included her alliance with the Pharisees) created tension between her sons which eventually led to the loss of the Hasmonean throne (see 13.414, 431-432; 14.46-48, 77-79, 91, 143).

Though this account of Alexandra’s reign is more detailed than that of *War* 1.110-114, the basic picture of the Pharisees is the same. They are popular among the masses (*War* 1.110; *Ant.* 13.401-402) and they are political troublemakers (*War* 1.113-114; *Ant.* 13.410). Josephus seems to have nothing but contempt for the Pharisees’ involvement in Alexandra’s government.

Again, this may be, as Saldarini suggests, because Josephus is a member of the aristocracy whose primary concern is for the peace of his country, or this may be, as Mason suggests, because Josephus holds a grudge against the Pharisees.⁶⁶ It does not, however, seem likely that this could serve as a means to promote the Pharisees to the Romans.⁶⁷

In *Antiquities* 14.172-176, 15.3-4, and 15.370, Josephus mentions two men with Pharisaic ties, Pollion and Samaias. Josephus calls Pollion a Pharisee explicitly (15.3). Samaias, however, is called the disciple of Pollion (15.3), which does not necessarily make him a Pharisee (cf. Hyrcanus I in *Ant.* 13.289).⁶⁸ In fact, in 14.172-74, Samaias enters Josephus' narrative (before Pollion) without the designation "Pharisee." There, during a murder trial the Sanhedrin was holding over Herod, Samaias verbally assaulted the Jewish leadership for being afraid and not finding Herod guilty of the crimes (14.172-174a). He also predicted that Herod would kill Hyrcanus and the other members of the council (14.174b). For his brave action, Josephus records that he was "a righteous man" (δίκαιος ἀνὴρ; 14.172). Because of this quality, and because he later counseled the people of Jerusalem to let Herod in during a siege, Herod spared his life when Samaias' prediction came true (14.176). Later (15.3), Josephus writes that Pollion had, with Samaias, advised the people of Jerusalem to open the city to Herod. Interestingly, in this later passage, Pollion is also given credit for Samaias' speech and prediction before the Sanhedrin (15.4). Herod held so much gratitude to the two men that, when they refuse to take an oath of allegiance to Herod, Herod did not punish them or their disciples as he did others who refused the oath (15.370).

Thus, Josephus here offers a fairly positive picture of two men associated with the Pharisees. They are influential and pious. However, it does not appear that a favorable picture

⁶⁶ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 84-85; Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 373.

⁶⁷ Cf. Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 159, 165-166; and Stemberger, 12-13, 19.

⁶⁸ Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 141.

of Pharisees was Josephus' main purpose. Had that been the case, he could have made Samaias' association with the group clear from the outset. As it stands, Pollion, the explicit Pharisee, is absent from the account where Samaias receives Josephus' praise (14.172-176).

In *Antiquities* 17.41-45, Josephus returns to Herod's court and to the relationship between Herod's sister-in-law and the Pharisees (cf. *War* 1.571). Here, Josephus again takes occasion to write about the Pharisees' reputation. This time, however, it is not the masses who acclaim the Pharisees, but the Pharisees themselves who boast about their accuracy in interpreting the Jewish laws and their favor with God (ἦν γὰρ μόριόν τι Ἰουδαϊκὸν ἀνθρώπων ἐπ' ἐξακριβώσει μέγα φρονοῦν τοῦ πατρίου καὶ νόμων οἷς χαίρει τὸ θεῖον προσποιουμένων; *Ant.* 17.41a). Josephus also says that these Pharisees ruled the women of Herod's court (17.41a). The influence of the Pharisees is, again, brought to the attention of the reader when Josephus writes that they "were entirely capable of issuing predictions for the king's benefit, and yet, evidently, they rose up to combat and injure [him]" (17.41b).⁶⁹ Unlike Pollion and Samaias' experience, Josephus records that later, when (another) 6,000 Pharisees refused to swear allegiance to Caesar and to Herod, they were issued a fine (17.42a). Herod's sister-in-law paid the fine for them (17.42b). The passage suggests that, since the Pharisees were believed to possess foreknowledge due to God's appearances to them (πρόγνωσιν δὲ ἐπεπίστευντο ἐπιφοιτήσει τοῦ θεοῦ; cf. *Ant.* 17.4; 15.3), they offered her prophecy concerning Herod's collapse and her family's rise to power (17.43). When Herod discovered this, he slaughtered the conspirators, including many Pharisees (17.44).

This unquestionably negative passage has often been attributed to Herod's historian, Nicolaus of Damascus.⁷⁰ The portrayal of Herod in *Antiquities*, however, has become harsher in

⁶⁹ Translation, including the bracketed word, from Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 263.

⁷⁰ E.g. Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 159-160; and A. I. Baumgarten, "The Name of the Pharisees," 414-416. However, Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 99 n. 52, writes that Josephus was "completely

tone than that of *War*.⁷¹ Since Josephus has modified his picture of Herod, one must ask why Josephus did not consider protecting the Pharisees' reputation in this passage if he was promoting them to the Romans, or even if he felt loyal to their group. He could have at least omitted the material, as he may have done in *War* 1.571, had he wished to portray them more positively. As Josephus has written it, the Pharisees appear as seditious false-prophets.⁷²

This portrayal is so negative that Rivkin denies that these “Φαρισαῖοι” represent the religious school at all, arguing instead that they represent a group of common “separatists” (from פרושין).⁷³ The primary piece of evidence that he offers to support his objection is the contrast between this account and *Antiquities* 15.370 where the Pharisee, Pollion, his disciple Samaias, and their other disciples are not punished for refusing to take an oath to Herod. Since, however, Pollion and Samaias were especially favored by Herod (14.175b-176a; 15.3, 370b), there is no reason to believe that other Pharisees received the same privileges.

The Pharisees final appearance in *Antiquities* (18.11-15, 17, 23) comes in the form of another explanation of the Jewish schools of philosophy (18.11-25). This material contextually coincides with *War* 2.119-166, coming right after the introduction of Judas the Galilean's rebels and their seditious philosophy (*Ant.* 18.4-10; cf. *War* 2.117-118).⁷⁴ In *Antiquities*, however, Judas has a Pharisaic companion named Saddok who helps incite the revolt (18.4).

In his discussion on the Pharisees, Josephus begins by quickly referring to their simplified lifestyle which is devoid of luxury, to their special care in following their received commandments, and to their respect which prevents them from contradicting their elders (18.12).

consistent in all his works in condemning troublemakers.” For a detailed discussion for and against Josephan authorship, see Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 275-280.

⁷¹ See Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1967), 65-67; and Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 261.

⁷² Cf. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 274.

⁷³ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 321-324.

⁷⁴ Judas is called “a Gaulonite” in *Ant.* 18.4.

Josephus then returns to the topic of fate and free will, saying that the Pharisees “postulate that everything is brought about by fate, still they do not deprive the human will of the pursuit of what is in man’s power” for God wills it so (18.13; Feldman, LCL). Finally, Josephus refers to the Pharisaic doctrine of bodily resurrection for the virtuous (18.14). Afterwards, Josephus adds that “on account of these (views), they happen to be most persuasive to the people” (δι’ αὐτὰ τοῖς τε δήμοις πιθανώτατοι τυγχάνουσιν; 18.15a).⁷⁵ Josephus claims that their influence extends to the prayers and other sacred rites of worship so that everything is done according to their interpretations (18.15b). He concludes by saying that the people honor them by practicing the Pharisaic customs in their way of life and in their words (18.15c).⁷⁶

The popularity that Josephus attributes to the Pharisees continues in the section dedicated to the Sadducees. He writes that the Sadducees do not believe in any resurrection, that they are strict biblicists, and that they openly debate issues with teachers (18.16). Due to this, their school is not well received and, despite being men of high standing, they have no influence; and whenever they are put into positions of power, they must adhere to the interpretations of the Pharisees because “otherwise the masses would not tolerate them” (18.17; Feldman, LCL). In this passage, Josephus attributes the Pharisees’ influence more to the popularity of their doctrines

⁷⁵ Translation, including bracketed word, by Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 305. He agrees in the same work, 301, that the word τυγχάνω should be translated “happen to be” (as Yaffe and Damico have done; see Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 320-321) according to its “most literal sense” (reflecting its root τύχη) because it fits the contextual indicators: (1) “Josephus openly praises the Essenes as superior to all others who make any claim to virtue” (18.20); (2) “he also gives *his* [emphasis Mason’s] opinion that the Sadducees include men of the highest standing... but that they are compelled by popular sentiment to accept ‘what the Pharisee says’” (18.17); and (3) “the absence of any unqualified commendation of the Pharisees.”

⁷⁶ The interpretation of *Ant.* 18.15c is made difficult by the word ἀρετή. Josephus may be saying that the people honor the Pharisees because of the quality of their goodness (cf. the translations of Whiston and Feldman, LCL), or he may be saying that the people honor them because of the magnitude of their influence (cf. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 302-305, who suggests that Josephus used Thucydides as a guide to his discussion, and that there the word ἀρετή “lacks a moral-evaluative sense” [305]). While the absence of a clear interpretation of this word makes it difficult to determine Josephus’ attitude toward the Pharisees here, this passage shows again that Josephus believed that the Pharisees were popular among the people (cf. 18.17).

and the manner in which they taught them rather than an actual oppressive hold over the masses. Nonetheless, he believes the vein of thought they represent saturates society.

Finally, when Josephus sets out to explain Judas the Galilean's revolutionary school, Josephus again refers to the Pharisees. Unlike *War* 2.118-166, where Josephus attempted to separate the three legitimate Jewish schools from Judas' illegitimate school, Josephus here claims that the "fourth philosophy" was entirely in agreement with the Pharisees, "except that they have a passion for liberty that is almost unconquerable, since they are convinced that God alone is their leader and master" (18.23; Feldman, LCL). Apparently, then, Josephus believed that the Pharisees were content under foreign dominion (cf. *War* 2.118-166, 411), or at least he wanted to portray them that way at this sensitive spot in his narrative.⁷⁷ At the same time, in line with Schwartz, it appears that by the time Josephus wrote *Antiquities* 18 he felt less obligated to protect the Jewish schools, and particularly the Pharisees, from the accusation of sedition than he did in *War*.⁷⁸ In this passage, only one issue divides the Pharisees from the revolutionaries.

In summary, the Pharisees of *Antiquities* are influential and popular among the masses. Josephus claims that the people approve of and follow their customs (e.g. 13.288; 18.15). Josephus has again, as in *War*, placed them in the middle of political intrigue, and again Josephus seems to disapprove of their involvement. He still acknowledges them as a legitimate form of Judaism, and even gives more specific details about their beliefs than in *War*. He is, however, also more willing to associate them with the seditious school of Judas the Galilean. Indeed, as Smith and Neusner have noted, *Antiquities* holds more information about the Pharisees than does *War*. At the same time, the additional information is much more critical of the Pharisees. Furthermore, *Antiquities* is a much more thorough work than *War* in general.

⁷⁷ Cf. Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 60.

⁷⁸ Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus," 169-170.

This general inflation of *Antiquities* probably offers a more legitimate explanation for the increase in Pharisaic detail than does the notion that Josephus sought to promote the Pharisees to the Romans.⁷⁹

3. *Josephus' Life*

Life is Josephus' apologetic autobiography.⁸⁰ In it, he writes that at age 16 he undertook a personal exploration of three schools of thought in Judaism: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes (§§ 10-12). He claims that he investigated each one thoroughly before joining a desert baptist named Banus (§ 11). Apparently, he was Banus' disciple for three years, until the age of nineteen (§ 12a). Then, "having accomplished the desire" (τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τελειώσας), he returned to the city "to engage in public life" (πολιτεύεσθαι), "conforming to the Pharisaic school" (τῇ Φαρισαίων αἰρέσει κατακολουθῶν), whom he likens to the Stoics (§ 12b).⁸¹

It has most often been assumed that Josephus claims here that he became a Pharisee after leaving Banus' group.⁸² This self-proclamation, however, would be difficult to accept given the ambivalent to negative picture of the Pharisees that Josephus generally offers.⁸³ Furthermore, Josephus never identifies his views as Pharisaic, and even though his views often resemble those of the Pharisees, they are not identical according to Josephus' references.⁸⁴ Mason therefore proposes that Josephus' comment in *Life* 12b should be read as an admission of "a necessary

⁷⁹ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 129-130.

⁸⁰ See S. J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, vol. 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 121-132.

⁸¹ Translations mine, but with heavy influence from Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 347-353.

⁸² E.g. Smith, 74; Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 46; Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 66; and Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 111.

⁸³ Cf. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 111, who doubts his Pharisaic allegiance due to his statements.

⁸⁴ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 330-339.

function of his entry into public life” due to the prestige that the Pharisaic school enjoyed at that time; and it “was not a deliberate choice of religious affiliation or a conversion.”⁸⁵

Mason offers evidence from Josephus’ word usage to support his theory. First, he argues that πολιτεύεσθαι is usually closely associated to πόλις (city) in Greek literature and should be translated as “live as a free citizen, take part in government, meddle with politics, hold public office, show public spirit,” and not as simply “behave, conduct,” etc. (cf. Whiston).⁸⁶ He points out that translating it as the latter makes the word κατακολουθῶν redundant.⁸⁷ Second, Mason mentions that, in Josephus’ works, κατακολουθῶν appears variously as “to agree with” (*Ag. Ap.* 1.17), “to obey” or “to conform to” (e.g. *Ant.* 1.14; 6.133, 147; 8.339; 12.255), and “to follow an example” or “to imitate” (e.g. *Ant.* 8.271; 9.99; 12.269).⁸⁸ Mason says its meaning is not clear in *Life* 12b, but he believes that it must be related to his public career because of the presence of πολιτεύεσθαι.⁸⁹ If Mason is correct, Josephus composed himself according to the Pharisaic customs so that he could successfully perform his civic duties.

Taken this way, this text seems to be in line with what Josephus says about those who enter public office in *Antiquities* 18.17, and it would make better sense of Josephus’ negative portrayal of the Pharisees elsewhere (e.g. *War* 1.110-114; *Ant.* 17.41-45). As such, Mason’s interpretation provides a viable alternative to the traditional interpretation of *Life* 12b, and, therefore, Josephus’ readers should be hesitant to identify him as a Pharisee.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 356.

⁸⁶ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 347.

⁸⁷ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 351.

⁸⁸ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 352.

⁸⁹ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 353.

⁹⁰ Cf. Stemberger, 6-7; and Sievers, “Who were the Pharisees,” 147.

Josephus' comparison between the Pharisees and the Stoics could refer to similarities in their philosophical stances.⁹¹ It could also refer to the pervasive nature that both philosophies/groups had on their societies.⁹² Josephus may have had either or both of these options in mind.

In *Life* 21, Josephus makes a short reference to the “leading Pharisees” (τοῖς πρώτοις τῶν Φαρισαίων) who were among those who met outside the temple on the eve of the Jewish revolt (cf. *War* 2.411). Josephus claims to have been there among them as they hopelessly sought to quiet the rebels. Asserting his presence there helps him establish his innocence in the instigation of the revolt, complementing his personal and apologetic reason for writing *Life* in the first place (cf. *Life* 340). As in *War*, Josephus portrays leadership, priestly and Pharisaic, as powerless to control the rioters who had been agitated by the rebels.⁹³ In this passage, then, as in *War* 2.411, the Pharisees' presence serves to help demonstrate the hopelessness of the situation.⁹⁴ A portion of the population was out of control, and neither (the authority of?) the priests nor (the popularity of?) the Pharisees had any influence to contain it.

In *Life* 189-198 Josephus recounts a conflict that he had with John of Gischala, a Pharisee named Simeon b. Gamaliel (§ 191), and a delegation which included a chief priest named Simon, two common Pharisees named Jonathan and Ananias, and a Pharisaic priest named Jozar (§ 197; however cf. *War* 2.628). Josephus claims that, during the revolt, these rebels were continuously

⁹¹ See Moore, “Fate and Free Will,” 374.

⁹² So Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 354, 354 n. 37. For the influence of Stoicism, see F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics*, Ancient Culture and Society (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), 16; and A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (London: Duckworth, 1974), 107.

⁹³ A few lines later, Josephus describes how the Syrians attacked the Jews for no reason, and then how even the Jewish masses chaotically turned against one another, some in rebellion and some in an attempt to quell it (*Life* 24-27a). Josephus concludes that “the war with the Romans was due not so much to the deliberate choice of the Jews as to necessity” (27b; Thackeray, LCL).

⁹⁴ This is not to say that Josephus was being deceptive in this account. It is quite possible that the leading Pharisees were actually there with the chief priests trying to stop the revolt. It is interesting, however, that he has chosen the Pharisees as the school to include and not the Essenes or the Sadducees. This clearly cannot be understood as a piece of propaganda aimed at a Roman endorsement for the Pharisees based on their political influence because the venture fails making this scene counterproductive to that end. However, given Josephus' many references to the Pharisees popularity (e.g. *War* 2.162; *Ant.* 18.14-15, 17), it is reasonable to suppose that Josephus mentions them here to emphasize the bleak state of affairs.

trying to remove him from his command in Galilee (*Life* 189-332; cf. *War* 2.626-631). Josephus places the largest measure of blame for this upon John of Gischala who actively campaigned for Josephus' removal so that he could rule Galilee, eventually winning the support of Simeon b. Gamaliel (*Life* 189-191). When Josephus reveals that Simeon b. Gamaliel is a Pharisee, he again mentions the Pharisees' reputation for accuracy (τῆς δὲ Φαρισαίων αἰρέσεως, οἱ περὶ τὰ πάτρια νόμιμα δοκοῦσιν τῶν ἄλλων ἀκριβεῖα διαφέρειν; *Life* 191). Some of the previous references to the Pharisees reputation have expressed a subtle irony (cf. *War* 1.110ff; *Ant.* 17.41ff) which Josephus may be employing here again.⁹⁵ Despite the fact that Simeon b. Gamaliel is a gifted and intelligent Pharisee from a prominent family, he engages in “mean behaviour (φάουλων ἔργον; § 194), duplicity (§ 195), bribery (§ 196), and scheming (§§ 196-198).”⁹⁶ The delegation fares badly as well. Despite their Pharisaic and priestly credentials, they engage in dubious activity at the bidding of John and Simeon. In *Life*, these men of status wrongfully persecute him, and Josephus is the only one who behaves justly in the end. Perhaps this is what one should expect, however, from Josephus' autobiographical apology.

In summary, Josephus wrote *Life* to defend himself, not to explain or promote the Pharisees. Nonetheless, he does mention that he stood shoulder-to-shoulder with some peaceful Pharisees and toe-to-toe with some villainous ones. The Pharisees of *Life* act both as advocates for peace and as catalysts for destruction. Some plead for peace before the war and others (?) opportunistically challenge Josephus in Galilee, maliciously tearing down his reputation, and

⁹⁵ See Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 364.

⁹⁶ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 363; he also points out, 316-324, 365, that Josephus' primary concern in *Life* was clearing his own name of wrongdoing (cf. §§ 340, 430); that in defending himself, it is very unlikely that he was also attempting to protect the Pharisees who appear as his enemies in the narrative; and therefore that the positive statements about Simeon b. Gamaliel may merely be Josephus' recognition of Simeon's reputation or an echoing of the work which Justus wrote to accuse Josephus of sedition.

eventually causing an intra-Jewish conflict at Tiberias. Josephus also claims that he thoroughly studied them and then imitated them in some fashion when he entered public life.

C. Conclusion on Josephus' Pharisees

Generally, Josephus' Pharisees enter his works because they have politically affected the status of the nation (e.g. *War* 1.110, 571; 2.411; *Ant.* 13.288, 401; 15.3; 17.41; *Life* 21), they influence or represent a segment of the population (e.g. *War* 2.119, 162; *Ant.* 13.288; 18.11), they represent a philosophical stance (e.g. *Ant.* 13.171f; *Life* 10-12), or individual Pharisees have injured him personally (*Life* 190). Josephus mentions a few details about the group's doctrines, but only when comparing them to other groups. Otherwise, he never spends a great deal of time explaining the Pharisees' beliefs, practices, or organization. In general, Josephus displays no interest in the Pharisees apart from their effects on the Jewish political scene.⁹⁷

Josephus makes several allusions to their popularity among the masses (e.g. *War* 1.110; 2.162; *Ant.* 13.288, 296, 298, 402; 17.41; 18.15, 17; *Life* 191), and the majority of these references come from Josephus' own hand. Josephus seems to believe that the majority of the population share the Pharisees' practices and beliefs (e.g. *Ant.* 13.296-298; 18.15), and he suggests that this is the reason that they are popular. He does not indicate, however, whether the Pharisees' customs have influenced and transformed Jewish society or vice-versa. Josephus may not even know the answer to that question. Josephus suggests that their views are so popular that Sadducean civic leaders have to acquiesce to them to receive respect. The masses, however, are never equated with the Pharisees because of their similar beliefs and practices. For Josephus, there is a popular philosophical vein within Judaism which the Pharisees advocate and/or teach,

⁹⁷ Cf. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 131.

but not everyone practicing it is a Pharisee. Pharisees even possess disciples who have not yet been given the title “Pharisee” (e.g. Hyrcanus, *Ant.* 13.289; and Samaias, *Ant.* 14.172ff; 15.3).

Aside from the lack of evidence for a Roman quest for a Jewish group to keep the peace late in the first century, Josephus makes no explicit assertion about the Pharisees ability to rule Palestine and his reoccurring negativity argues against an implicit promotion.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, they represent one of the several sociological forces in Josephus’ complex Palestine, sometimes vying for influence in political circles like an interest group.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Schwartz, “Josephus and Nicolaus,” 167-169; Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 128-132; contra Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 54.

⁹⁹ Saldarini, “Pharisees,” 293.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW TESTAMENT PHARISEES

A. The New Testament, Religious Conflicts, and Hypocrites

The biblical texts that will be covered in this chapter were penned by several different people, at least five: the men history remembers as Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. Their perspectives on the Pharisees diverge somewhat, so each author's work will be introduced and examined individually. Some of the largest questions about the reliability of this source material revolve around its time of writing and the possibility that a later version of Pharisaism is portrayed in these documents. The current chapter will attempt to address contributions of each author, his perspective, and his possible motivations.

It is not, however, the goal of this chapter to prove or disprove the allegations put forth by some New Testament authors that the Pharisees were hypocrites. Undoubtedly, one can find hypocrites in any religious movement, including first-century Judaism and first-century Christianity (cf. Luke 12:1-3; Acts 5:1-11). It would be difficult to maintain that one of the primary and distinctive features of Pharisaism was hypocrisy, as if it was a prerequisite for identification with the group. Such allegations should be taken as they were probably given, as polemical insults produced in a heated religious disagreement. This paper is more interested in the relationship between Pharisaism and Christianity that produced these allegations than the allegations themselves.

Where possible, this chapter seeks to understand the Pharisees' relationship to the power and social structures in Judea. This, of course, is somewhat difficult given that the source

material comes from a struggling minority group in Judaism which is on the verge of breaking away from its parent religion. Nonetheless, such a situation should not negate all the information about the Pharisees and their relationship to their society offered by the New Testament authors.

B. The New Testament's Sketch(es) of the Pharisees

1. Paul the Pharisee and the Jewish Apostle to the Gentiles

Philippians 3:5 contains the earliest known written reference to the Pharisees. Written somewhere between 50 and 63 C.E., it predates Josephus' first reference by 15-20 years and the final form of the Mishnah by approximately 150 years.¹ In this passage, Paul is protecting his ministry among the Gentiles. Some other group has opposed Paul elsewhere because he does not require circumcision for his Gentile converts, and, although it does not appear that his opponents have reached Philippi, Paul seeks to warn the Philippians about his rivals.² Wanting to establish that Gentile Christians need not become Jewish, Paul here asserts his Jewishness so that he can later argue that it is not essential to Christianity.³

Among his claims, Paul writes that he was, "as to the law, a Pharisee" (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος; 3.5).⁴ This appears to mean that Paul believed a Pharisee approached the law from a particular perspective, one which Paul viewed as a good credential, or at least assumed potential opponents would view it as such.⁵ Paul does not clarify, however, whether Pharisaism is an occupation, affiliation, or simply a mode of conduct. The relationship between his Pharisaic claim and his other claims is unknown. This passage offers no firm, logical connection between approaching the law as a Pharisee and zeal which lead to the persecution of a minority group like

¹ The date depends on where the letter was written; see G. F. Hawthorne, "Philippians, Letter to the," in *DPL*, eds. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 709-711.

² See F. Thielman, *Paul & the Law* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 149; and G. D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 289-290.

³ See Thielman, 152.

⁴ Translations from the New Testament are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁵ See Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?," 145; and Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 135, 143.

the Christian church (3:6). Certainly some discernable differences existed between Paul's Pharisaic interpretation and the Christian interpretation of the law during the 40's C.E., otherwise Paul's zeal would have had no basis for persecution.⁶ It is unlikely, however, that such differences mandated that every Pharisee persecute the church. There may have been other Pharisees like Paul, but his comments in Philippians do not demand that conclusion.

On another occasion, again flaunting his Jewish roots, Paul mentions that he was zealous for the traditions of his ancestors (ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων; Galatians 1:14b). This assertion has led some to suggest that Paul is again making a reference to his connection to the Pharisees.⁷ This, however, presupposes two things that cannot necessarily be justified from this text: first, that Paul is referring to a unique body of traditions among the Jews, and, second, that only the Pharisees held such a unique body of traditions from their ancestors. Paul does not elaborate on those traditions or even specify if he means special Pharisaic traditions. A bit of support may be mustered for such a connection by Paul's use of the word παράδοσις. Mark, similarly, uses it when speaking about the Pharisees and traditions (Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 13; cf. Matt. 15:2). Furthermore, Mason argues that the only two times the word παράδοσις appears in Josephus' works in a theologically charged way is when he is speaking of the Pharisaic traditions (*Ant.* 13.297, 408).⁸ As much as these correlations would seem to support the deduction that παράδοσις refers exclusively to Pharisaic traditions, Paul's own usage throws doubt on such a firm conclusion. The word is used four other times in the Pauline corpus: three

⁶ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 136.

⁷ E.g. Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 78, cf. 72.

⁸ Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees*, 233-235; where he notes that, of the other 25 occurrences of παράδοσις in Josephus' works, the noun is used thirteen times to mean the "surrender" a city or fort (*War* 1.174, 414; 4.86, 146, 414, 519; 5.336; 6.378, 7.195, 201, 205, 414; *Ant.* 10.10), two times to mean the "transmission" military signals or a password (*War* 2.579; *Ant.* 19.187), eight times to refer to his literary works (*Life* 361, 364, *Ag. Ap.* 1.8, 28, 39, 50, 53, 2.287), one time to mean "historical report" (*Ant.* 20.259), and one time to refer to the instruction given to a young King Josiah by his advisors (*Ant.* 10.51).

times to refer to Christian traditions handed down by Paul and his cohorts (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6) and once for generic “traditions of men” (Col. 2:8).⁹ This broader use of the term cautions against presuming a uniquely Pharisaic body of tradition in Galatians 1:14. It is quite possible that the traditions Paul references in Galatians include the Mosaic Law and all things he considered Jewish. Nonetheless, with Philippians 3:5 and Galatians 1:14 taken together, it may be said that Paul claimed to be a Pharisee and a follower of some body of Jewish traditions. Adherence to traditions is consistent with Pharisaic accounts elsewhere, but Galatians 1:14 should not necessarily be seen as another confession of Pharisaic allegiance.

This is the extent of explicit information that Paul offers about the Pharisees and their status or influence. A little extra information about Paul’s education can be sifted from his letters. Saldarini notes that Paul must have had lessons in basic grammar because his Greek is “fundamentally good, but not highly literate.”¹⁰ He also suggests that Paul’s familiarity with the Bible and its interpretations demonstrates “a solid Jewish education.”¹¹ How Paul’s education is related to his Pharisaic ties is unknown though. As a Pharisee, Paul’s education may have been typical or exceptional.

References to Paul in Acts will be treated in the section which deals with Luke-Acts.

2. *Pharisees in the Gospel of Mark*

The several explanations that “Mark” gives about Jewish customs (e.g. 7:3-5) reveal that he wrote his gospel with a Gentile audience in mind. How Mark the author was associated to the Jesus movement is unknown. According to the “Q” hypothesis, Mark was the earliest of the

⁹ However, three of these references (Col. 2:8; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6) come from contested letters.

¹⁰ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 140.

¹¹ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 140.

synoptic gospels to be completed, and it served as a source for the other two.¹² Best estimates place the date of the gospel between 66 and 75 C.E.¹³ If so, Mark wrote close enough to the Jewish revolt to offer some highly coveted insight into the pre-70 Pharisaic movement.

Before examining Mark, limits must be set on which groups will be considered Pharisaic. Rivkin suggests that “the Scribes and the Pharisees are one and the same” in the gospels because their doctrines never conflict with one another.¹⁴ This allows Rivkin to use several Markan passages which refer to scribes as evidence for Pharisaic influence.¹⁵ This is advantageous to Rivkin’s interpretation of Pharisees since Mark generally portrays the scribes as part of the power structure of Palestine, the authorities of interpretation, and Jesus’ most consistent opponents.¹⁶ However, Mark’s use of the designation “scribes of the Pharisees” (γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων; 2:16)¹⁷ and the combination “the Pharisees and the scribes” (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ τινες τῶν γραμματέων; 7:1, 5) seem to indicate that he believed there was a general distinction between a Pharisee and a scribe.¹⁸ Also, while Mark often mentions the scribes alone (e.g. 1:22; 3:22; 9:11, 14; 12:28, 32, 35, 38), he sometimes connects scribes to other groups (8:31; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 14:1, 43, 53; 15:1, 31).¹⁹ The scribes, with their interpretive authority, might represent Pharisaic interests at times, but they probably would be better considered an

¹² This assumption is accepted in this paper. On the Q (*Quelle*) hypothesis, see G. N. Stanton, “Q,” in *DJG*, eds. J. B. Green and S. McKnight (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 644-650.

¹³ For general information on the authorship, audience, and dating of the gospel of Mark, see J. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, AB (New York, et al.: Doubleday, 2000), 17-39; on the dating of Mark.

¹⁴ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 111.

¹⁵ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 104-111.

¹⁶ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 151-153, 159-160; cf. Stemberger, 22.

¹⁷ However, manuscripts A and C read: “οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι.”

¹⁸ Marcus, 227, 519; although Rivkin’s suggestion cannot be entirely ruled out on these grounds alone because the possibility exists that both designations, “οἱ γραμματεῖς” and “οἱ Φαρισαῖοι,” simultaneously refer to some of the same individuals in the groups.

¹⁹ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 146-147.

occupational class, individually associated with various groups.²⁰ Therefore, the scribes will not be used in this study unless specifically attached to the Pharisees to avoid possible confusion. Mark uses the term “Pharisees” twelve times: ten times as active participants (2:16, 18, 24; 3:2, 6; 7:1, 5; 8:11; 10:2; 12:13), once as an illustration (8:15), and once to explain Jewish practice (7:3). All of their appearances occur in Galilee except one (12:13).²¹

Mark first mentions Pharisees in the midst of a series of conflict vignettes (2:1-3:6).

Mark writes that people associated with the Pharisees challenge Jesus, or his disciples, on certain issues: the “scribes of the Pharisees” disapprove of his table-fellowship with “tax collectors and sinners” (2:16); Pharisees grouped together with disciples from John the Baptist question Jesus about his disciples’ lack of fasting (2:18); some Pharisees denounce his disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath (2:24); and a group, presumably Pharisees since they are the antecedent opposition (2:24) and the subject of the conclusion (3:6), disapproves of Jesus’ use of healing on the Sabbath (3:2). There appear to be several levels of tradition contained in these vignettes, making it possible that they offer information from a source that predates Mark.²² It appears that Mark (or his source) felt the Pharisees adequately represented the adversarial positions for several of these scenes. While concluding that any of these issues were uniquely Pharisaic or that the Pharisees’ positions were necessarily more pronounced than mainstream Judaism may be unjustified, even a conservative approach to these conflict vignettes offers the following Markan appraisal: the Pharisees have some minimum requirements for dinner companions (2:16); they fast, not unlike the disciples of John the Baptist (2:18); and they carefully observe the Sabbath

²⁰ See Marcus, 523-524; cf. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, WUNT (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck, 1992), 89-93, who does not believe that connection between the Pharisees and scribes can be maintained.

²¹ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 147.

²² See J. Dewy, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1-3:6*, SBLDS 48 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 67-74, 80-85, 89-104; R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 82-83; and Marcus, 213-214. Whether or not the original version or other pre-Markan versions likewise named the Pharisees is another question.

(2:24; 3:2-6). Furthermore, Mark seems to believe that they might challenge other Jewish teachers who did not keep the same standards, and even resort to violence to protect their interests (3:6).

In Mark 7:1-5, the Pharisees again enter the narrative as Jesus' opponents on an issue of conduct. The Pharisees (and some scribes) challenge Jesus because his disciples do not ritually cleanse their hands before eating (7:2-5). Mark adds an editorial comment which suggests that washing one's hands and utensils before a meal was important to the "Pharisees and all the Jews" (7:3). He attaches this practice to the "tradition of the elders" (παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων; 7:3, 5). Mark's Jesus rejects this tradition, and one other related to temple gifts (7:11-12 // Matt. 15:5), producing further tension between the two groups.

In these confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees, the boundary markers of a community were at stake.²³ A boundary marker helped a group determine who was and was not a part of their group's movement. According to Mark, washing one's hands (7:1-5), healing on the Sabbath (3:2), plucking grain on the Sabbath (2:24), fasting (2:18), and eating with tax collectors and "sinners" (2:16) were among those things which created a distinction between Jesus and the Pharisees and became their points of conflict. Asserting their boundary markers over Jesus and his disciples would imply that the Pharisees claimed some authority over Jesus' group. Ignoring the Pharisees' boundary markers would imply that Jesus rejected their authority.²⁴

²³ See J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 72-73.

²⁴ Sanders argued vehemently against the notion that the Pharisees had the power to label someone as a "sinner" for failing to uphold their unique traditions and suggested that the "sinners" of Mark 2:16 had been labeled as such because they had significantly broken the Mosaic Law (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 210). Sanders may be correct, especially considering their alignment next to tax collectors, but infractions of any boundary marker, depending on the importance it is given by a community and no matter where it originated, can result in the alienation of the nonconformist (see Dunn, 73-77). Whether these mavericks had broken the Mosaic Ten Commandments, some social norm(s) considered essential to Jewish life, or a specifically Pharisaic tradition cannot

Mark's portrayal makes sense if he believes one or more of the following: Jesus was a Pharisee, some Pharisees guarded a set of boundaries they shared with others in the Jewish community, or/and some Pharisees were imposing their unique boundaries on other people.²⁵ Mark's assertion, that "all the Jews" (πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι; 7:3) purified their hands and table utensils makes it appear as though at least some of the Pharisees' boundary markers were consistent with the boundary markers of the majority of Jews.²⁶ Some have challenged this assertion as erroneous.²⁷ The challenge assumes, however, that traditions governing table purifications could only have been held by a minority of Jews in pre-70 Judaism because: (1a) the Pharisees were the only group that had "traditions from the elders"; or (1b) these specific traditions are somehow uniquely Pharisaic; and (2) the Pharisees had little or no influence outside their own ranks. These premises, however, have not been established beyond question, leaving the legitimacy of Mark's comment, if understood as a generalization about the practice of the Jewish majority, open for debate.²⁸ Mark claims in 7:1-5 that the Pharisees were *among* the Jews who purified their hands before eating, and some of them even expected it from others, including Jesus' disciples. This is a claim which Mark's synoptic partners accept and reassert, even though they do not follow Mark in attributing the practice to "all the Jews."²⁹ If the

be concretely determined. For some reason, Mark believed that these Pharisees deemed some of Jesus' companions as outside the covenant, thus giving them the label "sinner."

²⁵ Maccoby, *Revolution*, 98, 203-206, suggested that Jesus was a Pharisee because he saw so much continuity between Jesus' teaching and the teaching found in rabbinic literature; see also his *Jesus the Pharisee* (London: SCM Press, 2003).

²⁶ "All the Jews," at best, is a mild exaggeration and should be understood as a generalization about the practices of the majority; see Guelich, 364; and Marcus, 20.

²⁷ For details, see Marcus, 19-20, 440-441; and Guelich, 363-364.

²⁸ See Guelich, 364; Marcus, 440-441; Sanders, *Practice & Belief*, 237; and S. Westerholm, "Clean and Unclean," in *DJG*, eds. J. B. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Marshall (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 129.

²⁹ Matthew's parallel account (15:1-2) and Luke's quasi parallel account (11:37-38) have both dropped the entire Markan editorial comment (7:3-4). Their omission, therefore, excludes more than the phrase in question, suggesting that they had not specifically focused on πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. Most likely, they found the whole explanation about the custom unnecessary and removed it on that basis, leaving behind no indication as to whether

Pharisees truly challenged Jesus because his disciples did not wash, one must accept that it was either a fairly common practice, or that Jesus, for some reason, was expected to uphold this uniquely Pharisaic tradition among his disciples (perhaps because Jesus was or they thought he was a Pharisee, because Jesus and his disciples had entered a Pharisee's house, or because the Pharisees, as a minority group, were actively attempting to subjugate the local community, including Jesus' followers, to their traditions – all of which could be simultaneously true). Matthew and Luke remain ambiguous on this point, but Mark explicitly chooses the former option for his gospel. Mark 7:1-5, therefore, does not offer evidence for uniquely Pharisaic practice, but instead seems to align some of their practice (ceremonial washings for purity at the table) with the practice of the majority of Jews.

Archeology may offer some support for Mark's claim that these boundary markers were a significant aspect of the society in which Jesus lived. Mark records that these events took place in Galilee. In the past, it was often thought that a large part of the population consisted of Gentiles, but archeology in Galilee has uncovered synagogues, ritual baths beneath the floors of houses, and many stone jars that would have been consistent with those associated with ritual purity rites.³⁰ These excavations and artifacts not only suggest that the region was predominately Jewish, but that purity rights were an important feature in their lives.³¹ This increases the chance that some of the boundary markers associated with ritual purity, like washing one's hands before a meal, were practiced by a significant number of people. This could have made a Pharisee who obeyed the "traditions of the elders" (7:3, 5) fit into Galilee's cultural mainstream better, whether

they agreed with Mark's assessment or not. Regardless, both Matthew and Luke seem to agree that the Pharisees might attack Jesus or his disciples for not upholding the tradition.

³⁰ See J. F. Strange, "Galilee," in *DNTB*, eds. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 395-397; cf. Marcus, 521-522.

³¹ Strange, 395-396; and Marcus, 522.

everyone else there thought the practice was Pharisaic or not. It might also make a popular teacher, like Jesus, more shocking to those who upheld the practices.

These conflicts over social boundaries make it appear as though some Pharisees and Jesus are in a competition over the influence of their local community.³² This scenario is not impossible because the temple leadership located in Jerusalem would have had less influence in the Galilean communities, placing the more immediate authority in the hands of local religious leaders. Thus, religious teachers, whether Pharisaic or not, might have had more at stake when disputes arose over beliefs and practices. Even a few individual Pharisees possessing a little personal influence, involved in teaching, or functioning in another community leadership role might have had a great deal of impact on the practices of the Galilee Jews.³³ Mark presents the Pharisees in his gospel as if they were defending the accepted social guidelines, though it cannot be said whether Mark believed that the Pharisees transformed the culture with their teaching or protected certain traditions previously established and practiced by the broader Galilean society.³⁴ Jesus appears to be creating another group with looser social boundaries, making it difficult for the Pharisees to control.³⁵ This loss of control prompts Mark's Pharisees to align themselves with the Herodians when they are unable to correct his behavior (3:6).

Mark couples the Pharisees with the Herodians two times in a conspiracy against Jesus (3:6; 12:13; cf. 8:15). In Mark 3:6, at the conclusion of the conflict vignettes (2:1-3:6), the Pharisees go out and ally themselves with the Herodians to plot Jesus' assassination. This might suggest that their sociological influence had limits in Mark's mind. The "Herodians" most likely

³² See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 150-151.

³³ See Dunn, 77-79; and Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 291-297.

³⁴ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 150-151.

³⁵ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 150.

most associated with his crucifixion (e.g. 8:31; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 12:39; 14:1, 10, 43, 53, 55; 15:1, 3, 10, 11, 31). Even though the Pharisees plot against Jesus in Galilee (3:6) and try to trap him in Jerusalem (12:13), they are never explicitly listed in connection with the conspiracy that leads to his death. Their absence in the passion narratives is a consistent feature of all four gospels, suggesting that the evangelists all “drew on traditions which agreed that the Pharisees were not major factors in the crucifixion.”⁴⁰ It may also suggest that the evangelists did not believe the Pharisees’ status in Judean society gave them the ability to arrange a crucifixion.⁴¹

Mark creates an interesting association between the Pharisees and other groups in 12:13 that should be addressed. There, Mark introduces the Pharisees and Herodians by saying that the chief priests, scribes, and elders (cf. 11:27) sent (ἀποστέλλουσιν) them to trap Jesus (12:13). It is possible, though not certain, that Mark sees both the Pharisees and Herodians acting as lower ranking liaisons between the Jerusalem leadership and the government of Herod. If so, this might offer evidence to support the claim that the Pharisees belong to the retainer class, even though this would seem to place the Herodians in that class as well.⁴² Neither Matthew nor Luke kept this introduction as Mark wrote it, making deductions from it more tentative. Matthew replaces the chief priests, scribes, and elders with the Pharisees, and he has them send their own disciples along with the Herodians to test Jesus (22:15-16). Luke, on the other hand, retains the chief priests and scribes, but he does not designate whom they sent to perform the test, instead calling them “spies” (ἐγκαθέτους; 20:20). It is unclear why these later authors perceived the need (if intentional) to modify or obscure the Markan Pharisees’ relationship to these groups. Mark may not have been interested in describing the authentic relationship between the Pharisees

⁴⁰ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 197; cf. Saldarini, “Pharisees,” 296, 298.

⁴¹ Other possibilities exist as well, including the possibility that the evangelists wished to place his death on the shoulders of the chief priests for theological reasons.

⁴² On the retainer class, see Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 149-150, 295-297.

and the chief priests at all, but his account, as written, opens the possibility that the Pharisees could serve the Jerusalem elite.

In summary, Mark concentrates on the Pharisees as Jesus' opponents. That Jesus and the Pharisees were theological opponents is explicitly stated in Mark's account. That they were sociological competitors is more implicit, but evident. The Pharisees challenge Jesus' authority, and Jesus challenges theirs. At stake is popular control of interpretation and practice, and, according to Mark, the Pharisees hold the established high ground.⁴³ The Pharisees of Mark's gospel, however, are not especially powerful. They have to ally themselves with the Herodians to plot Jesus' death in Galilee (3:6), they can be sent to do the bidding of the ranking Jerusalem officials (12:13), and the priests and scribes eclipse their importance in Jerusalem.

3. *Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew*

Debate exists over "Matthew" and whether he was a Jewish or a Gentile Christian, causing his gospel to be called both the most Jewish and anti-Semitic.⁴⁴ Several features of his gospel, however, seem to favor the notion that Matthew was a Jewish Christian writing to a Jewish-Christian audience. For example, he is concerned that the Jewish law should be obeyed (5:17-20); he has no trouble saying that Jesus came only to Israel (15:24); unlike Mark, he does not bother to explain Jewish customs (e.g. Matt. 15:2-3; cf. Mark 7:3-4); and many of his themes and Christological titles are rooted in Jewish tradition.⁴⁵ Most believe that the gospel was written either in Palestine or Syria and date it to between 80 and 90 C.E.⁴⁶

⁴³ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 150-151.

⁴⁴ See S. McKnight, "Matthew, Gospel of," in *DJG*, eds. J. B. Green and S. McKnight (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 528.

⁴⁵ D. J. Harrington, *Matthew*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 9.

⁴⁶ For general information on the Gospel of Matthew, see Harrington, 3-22; and McKnight, 526-540.

Matthew uses the term “Pharisee” or “Pharisees” twenty-eight times.⁴⁷ Much of Matthews’ material comes from Mark’s gospel without any significant change to the picture offered by Mark.⁴⁸ Matthew, however, does modify Mark’s narrative in places. Matthew adds Pharisees where Mark did not have them: he replaces the scribes who accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan (Mark 3:22) with Pharisees (Matt. 9:34 // 12:24); he replaces a friendly scribe who converses with Jesus about the greatest commandment (Mark 12:28) with a hostile Pharisee (Matt. 22:34);⁴⁹ and he adds another hostile Pharisee to set up Jesus’ discussion about the lineage of Christ (Matt. 22:41; cf. Mark 12:35). The Pharisees appear closer to the ruling class in Matthew’s gospel, becoming angered after Jesus’ parable about the wicked tenants and seeking his arrest with the chief priests (Matt. 21:45; cf. Mark 12:12). Matthew’s Pharisees are present and active in Jerusalem, and, even though they do not directly participate in the crucifixion conspiracy, they bracket the passion narrative (22:34-35; 27:62-65).⁵⁰ Matthew also seems to make his Pharisees more independent than Mark’s: they do not meet with the Herodians to plot against Jesus (Mark 3:6), but meet among themselves (Matt. 12:14); and they are not sent out by the Jerusalem officials to trap Jesus in his words (Mark 12:13), but instead organize themselves, sending their own disciples out with the Herodians (Matt. 22:15-16).⁵¹ The

⁴⁷ This count omits Matt. 23:14 which is excluded from the Nestle-Aland 27th edition; Matt. 3:7; 5:20; 9:11, 14, 34; 12:2, 14, 24, 38; 15:1, 12; 16:1, 6, 12; 19:3; 21:45; 22:15, 34, 41; 23:2, 13, [14], 15, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29; 27:62.

⁴⁸ In Matt. 9:11 (cf. Mark 2:16) they challenge Jesus for eating with sinners; in Matt. 9:14 (cf. Mark 2:18) the Pharisees fast, but only the disciples of John question Jesus; in Matt. 12:2 (cf. Mark 2:24) they challenge Jesus’ disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath; in Matt. 12:14 (cf. Mark 3:6) they conspire to kill Jesus, but without the Herodians; in Matt. 12:38 cf. Matt. 16:1 (cf. Mark 8:11) they request a sign; in Matt. 15:1-2 (cf. Mark 7:1-5) they challenge Jesus’ disciples for not keeping tradition; in Matt. 16:6-12 (cf. Mark 8:15) Jesus warns of the leaven of the Pharisees; in Matt 19:3-7 (cf. Mark 10:2-4) they test Jesus over divorce; and in Matt. 22:16 (cf. Mark 12:13) they test Jesus over paying taxes.

⁴⁹ It should be noted, however, that, in Mark’s account of a “friendly scribe,” the scribe still “questions” (ἐ0φρω&thsen) Jesus, and shortly afterwards Jesus openly rebukes the scribes (Mark 12:38-40). Therefore, while Matthew changes the scribe into a Pharisee, the overall tone is not that inconsistent with Mark’s. Cf. Luke’s hostile lawyer which replaces Mark’s scribe (Luke 10:25).

⁵⁰ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 168.

⁵¹ Cf. Stemberger, 25.

Pharisees of Matthew's gospel remain Jesus' opponents on issues of practical theology, but their opposition has been made more acute, and somewhat more prestigious. Matthew's Pharisees replace and outshine Mark's undesigned scribes.

Matthew's hostility to the Pharisees is immediately evident. They enter his gospel with the Sadducees, approaching John for baptism (Matt. 3:7). Instead of water, Matthew's John douses them with contempt, refusing to baptize them until they "produce fruit worthy of repentance" and warning them that their Jewish lineage is not enough to save them from the coming wrath of God (3:7-10). In this first critique, Matthew seems to frame his diagnosis of the Pharisees (along with the Sadducees and perhaps the other Jewish leaders) as a failure to repent and do good works (as prescribed by John and Jesus) because they believe that their status ensures their favor with God. It is a direct attack on one of the most valuable commodities for a religious group: their integrity. Matthew sustains this accusation of hypocrisy throughout his gospel, climaxing in chapter 23.⁵²

Two passages unique to Matthew's gospel seem to reveal the purpose of his polemic. In Matthew 5:20, after Jesus asserts his dedication to the law (5:17), declares its permanence (5:18), and requires obedience to it (5:19), he adds that the righteousness of his followers must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (and the scribes) for them to enter the kingdom of heaven.⁵³ In this statement, one assumption and two claims are made. First, it assumes that the Pharisees (with the scribes) possess a favorable reputation for religious excellence. They represent a common standard of piety.⁵⁴ Second, it claims that their piety is inadequate. The "kingdom" requires more than a Pharisee's righteousness. Third, it claims that Jesus and his followers are

⁵² Cf. Harrington, 57.

⁵³ For more information on the Matthean community's view of the law, see Harrington, 84.

⁵⁴ Cf. Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 87.

more pious than the Pharisees.⁵⁵ Similar claims exist in Matthew 23:2-3 which introduces a condemnatory discourse focused on hypocrisy (23:3-32). There, Jesus says that the Pharisees (and the scribes) “sit on the seat of Moses” (v. 2), and he requires his followers to obey their judgments (v. 3a). The upshot comes when he claims that the Pharisees (and scribes) do not practice what they preach (v. 3b). As in 5:20, Matthew here claims that they fall short of the standard they represent. These two Matthean statements are polemical, but they also seem to reveal a motivation for it. For Matthew, the Pharisees represent a form of piety which is highly esteemed and well established, and, therefore, in competition with the Christian movement.⁵⁶

Due to statements like Matthew 5:20 and 23:2, Neusner believes that Matthew’s gospel is a response to Yavneh (ca. 70-125 C.E.) where, he assumes, the Pharisees had just begun to pressure the religion of Palestine with their theological interpretations.⁵⁷ From this assumption, he argues that the portrayal of the Pharisees’ prestige and their conflict with the church in Matthew’s gospel are anachronistic. Neusner’s claim is quite possible, but there is reason to believe that Matthew’s assumptions about the Pharisees have some historical basis. Before 70 C.E., Paul, like Matthew, seems to believe that the Pharisees have a positive reputation. Mark, writing before Yavneh could have had much impact, puts the Pharisees in competition with Jesus over interpretation and practice (e.g. Mark 2:16-3:5), even placing them among the Jewish majority on at least one issue (Mark 7:1-5). Matthew appears to accept and build upon Mark’s form of conflict. It is therefore possible, perhaps likely, that the Pharisees’ reputation for piety and competition with the church predates the destruction of the temple. Nonetheless, the friction

⁵⁵ See McKnight, 540.

⁵⁶ Cf. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 164.

⁵⁷ See Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 79, who cites W. D. Davies, *The setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 315, because his assessment of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount has implications for the gospel as a whole. Cf. Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 83, 87-88, 124, who sees these references as an indication that the Pharisees ruled the religion of Palestine even before 70 C.E.

of Matthew's gospel is more heated, possibly due to a later situation.⁵⁸ The Pharisees' complete control of post-70 Palestinian Judaism, however, has not been established here or in scholarly debates on the subject.⁵⁹

It is also possible, however, that Matthew's increased polemic resulted more from his theological proximity to the Pharisees rather than from his later composition date.⁶⁰ The closer one group is to another, the more susceptible they may be to conflict in order to protect their respective boundaries.⁶¹ Perhaps Matthew makes an effort to discredit the Pharisees' reputation for piety because he felt that, for a largely Jewish-Christian audience remaining faithful to the Mosaic Law (e.g. Matt. 5:17-19), their reputation was as seductive as their interpretation, if not more so (Matt. 23:2-3). If Matthew was in a Jewish setting, it is possible that his situation would have been more like Jesus' own situation. It is not impossible that, if Jesus sparred with the Pharisees and if they had a favorable reputation, Jesus used tactics similar to those described in Matthew's gospel.⁶² Matthew's polemical tactics could fit equally well in a pre or post-70 intra-Jewish conflict and nothing demands that the debate postdates Jesus himself. At the same time, nothing guarantees its origin with him either.

In summary, while Matthew follows much of Mark's narrative and addresses some of the same issues as Mark does, he also increases their appearances in his gospel and escalates the tension. Matthew uses the Pharisees as Jesus primary opponents. They appear in Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. Matthew attacks their integrity and alludes to their reputation and authority.

⁵⁸ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 172-173.

⁵⁹ See Stemberger, 140-147; and Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 196.

⁶⁰ Cf. Stemberger, 141.

⁶¹ See Dunn, 72; and L. A. Coser, *The Foundations of Social Conflict* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956).

⁶² See D. A. Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 2:673.

4. *Pharisees in Luke-Acts*

“Luke” was probably a Gentile. Some argue that he was a “God-fearer” who was well acquainted with Judaism through the synagogue before becoming a Christian. Some “we” passages in Acts suggest that he may have been an associate of Paul the apostle (e.g. 16:10; 20:5; 21:8; 27:1). His original audience, Theophilus and others, were most likely predominately Gentile. He seems concerned to create continuity between Judaism and Christianity by showing that God fulfills his promises to Israel and extends the blessings to Gentiles in Christ. His two literary works function together to accomplish this goal. He may have written his gospel and Acts between 80 and 85 C.E.⁶³

Luke mentions the Pharisees by name twenty-eight times in his gospel and nine times in Acts.⁶⁴ As Matthew had done, Luke takes some of his material on the Pharisees from Mark without significant modification.⁶⁵ Luke adds the Pharisees to at least one Markan passage, where the paralytic is forgiven and healed (Luke 5:17-26 // Mark 2:1-12), and he removes them from at least one, where Jesus is asked for a sign from heaven (Luke 11:16 // Mark 8:15). These changes are less dramatic than Matthew’s, and they really do not alter Mark’s portrayal that much. Luke 20:20 also omits the explicit reference to the Pharisees of Mark 12:13 (cf. Matt. 22:15-16) where Jesus is tested over imperial taxes, calling Jesus’ tempters “spies pretending to

⁶³ For general information about Lukan authorship, dating, and purpose, see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1985), 1:53-57; L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 1-10; *ibid*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 14-18; J. Nolland, *Luke*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 1:xxxii, xxxvii-xxxix; and F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1954), 17-24.

⁶⁴ Luke 5:17, 21, 30, 33; 6:2, 7; 7:30, 36 (x2), 37, 39; 11:37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 53; 12:1; 13:31; 14:1, 3; 15:2 16:14; 17:20; 18:10, 11; 19:39; Acts 5:24; 15:5; 23:6 (x3), 7, 8, 9; 26:5.

⁶⁵ In Luke 5:30 (cf. Mark 2:16) they challenge Jesus for eating with sinners and tax collectors; in Luke 5:33 (cf. Mark 2:18) they fast and question Jesus about his disciples’ practices; in Luke 6:2 (cf. Mark 2:24) they challenge Jesus’ disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath; in Luke 6:7 (cf. Mark 3:2, also Pharisees according to 3:6) they watch Jesus to see if he will heal on the Sabbath; in Luke 6:11 (cf. Mark 3:6) they plot among themselves (Mark includes the Herodians) against Jesus; and in Luke 12:1 (cf. Mark 8:15) Jesus warns his disciples about their leaven.

be righteous” (ἐγκαθέτους ὑποκρινομένους ἑαυτοὺς δίκαιους εἶναι). It is possible that Luke sees this as some kind of equivalent statement, given similar descriptions of the Pharisees earlier in his gospel (16:15; 18:9ff).⁶⁶ If so, they are not mentioned in conjunction with the Herodians, either here in Luke 20:20 or in Luke 6:11, as they were in Mark’s gospel (3:6; 12:13).⁶⁷

Luke does, however, make an association between Herod and the Pharisees in another way. In Luke 13:31, the Pharisees approach Jesus in Galilee and warn him to leave the region because Herod is planning to kill him. After Jesus refuses their advice, he sends them back to Herod with his own message (Luke 13:32-33). The historicity of this passage has been challenged, but, even where it has been accepted, the authenticity of the Pharisees’ report has been questioned.⁶⁸ It is possible that Luke views these Pharisees as favoring Jesus over Herod, honestly looking to rescue him from death.⁶⁹ This, however, might not fit with the Pharisees’ literary role in the rest of the gospel where, even when things start out seemingly benign, they quickly turn sour and conflict erupts.⁷⁰ This leads to two other possibilities: either Luke’s Pharisees are lying about Herod to scare Jesus away; or that they have formed an alliance with Herod to scare Jesus out of Galilee together.⁷¹ Since Luke’s Jesus gives a response to Herod through the Pharisees instead of to the Pharisees themselves, the latter option seems to be the more viable presumption of Luke’s intentions. This would mean that Luke believed that some of the Pharisees could have direct connections to Herod. However, even if their warning is interpreted as sincere, despite their many conflicts with Jesus elsewhere, the Pharisees are still

⁶⁶ See Johnson, *Luke*, 311.

⁶⁷ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 177, suggests that Luke tends to disconnect the group from politics.

⁶⁸ See Nolland, 2:740.

⁶⁹ E.g. Stemmerger, 29; Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 177; Fitzmyer, 2:1030; and J. A. Ziesler, “Luke and the Pharisees,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 146-157.

⁷⁰ See Johnson, *Luke*, 217, 220-221; and Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 174-175.

⁷¹ Nolland, 2:740.

portrayed as informed insiders.⁷² Either way, this passage seems to support Saldarini's view that the Pharisees acted as middlemen between the governing class and the people.⁷³

Elsewhere Luke portrays the Pharisees as having status above the common people. One of the major themes of Luke's gospel is the reversal of fortunes: the "righteous poor," women, tax collectors, and sinners receive God's kingdom and his grace while those who are well-to-do, religiously astute, and in power find themselves holding an empty bag (e.g. 1:51-53; 4:18; 6:20-26; 7:22, 29-30; 14:11-13, 21, 24; 16:19-31; 24:8-11).⁷⁴ As Luke's narrative plays out, it is the poor, the outsiders, and the general people who accept the message of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles (e.g. Luke 7:29; 13:17; 15:1; 17:16-18; 19:37; cf. Acts 5:15; 16:14-15),⁷⁵ while the rich, the religious experts, and leaders doubt and challenge it (e.g. Luke 18:23; 19:47; 20:19; 22:2, 52, 66; cf. Acts 4:1-3, 8-10, 17; 12:1). For Luke, the Pharisees consistently fit into the latter group (e.g. Luke 5:21, 30, 33; 6:2, 7; 7:30; 11:53; 16:14; 17:20; 19:39). The Pharisees' reversal of fortunes is especially evident in three places. First, in Luke 7:30 where, even though "all the people" and the "tax collectors justified God" by accepting John's baptism (7:29), the Pharisees (and the lawyers) are said to "reject the counsel of God" by refusing to be baptized. Second, in Luke 16:14-31 where the Pharisees are called "lovers of money" (16:14) because they scoff at Jesus' teaching about giving to the poor (16:1-13). This causes Jesus to respond by telling them, ultimately in a parable, that the rich will receive an unpleasant afterlife if they do not recognize that his teaching about charity is consistent with Moses' (6:15-31).⁷⁶ Finally, in Luke 18:9-14, when people around Jesus are despised by others who think themselves superior

⁷² Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 177.

⁷³ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 177 n. 10.

⁷⁴ See Johnson, *Luke*, 22.

⁷⁵ Luke's Jewish people in his gospel and Acts predominately side with John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles until they side with the chief priests and rulers in the scene where Jesus stands before Pilate (Luke 23:13-18), and then again until they turn against Paul when he says that he has been sent to the Gentiles (Acts 22:22); see Johnson, *Luke*, 370

⁷⁶ Cf. Johnson, *Luke*, 254-256.

in righteousness, Luke's Jesus creates an illustration that pits the righteousness of a pious Pharisee against that of a repentant tax collector, giving the underdog the day because he is humble.⁷⁷ In each of these three cases, the Pharisees are, for Luke, something other than the ordinary man. They represent part of the well-to-do, upper class which has failed to recognize the movement of God in Jesus' ministry, and which has already received its comfort (cf. Luke 6:24). Luke has, in essence, portrayed the average Pharisee as if he had more money, more influence, and a better reputation for piety than the average Jew.

Like Mark, however, the Pharisees of Luke's gospel virtually disappear in Jerusalem where the chief priests and scribes take the foreground as Jesus' opponents (e.g. 19:47; 20:1, 19; 22:2, 66; 23:10). The gospel last mentions the Pharisees by name just outside Jerusalem, where they ask Jesus to silence his disciples' praises (19:39). Luke 20:20 might allude to the Pharisees, as mentioned above, but it is also possible that Luke purposely omitted Mark's reference (Mark 12:13) to make a clean distinction between the opposition inside and outside Jerusalem.⁷⁸ Another possibility is that Luke does not envision the Pharisees as having much influence in the city itself. Outside of Jerusalem, however, the Pharisees, sometimes accompanied by scribes or lawyers, are Jesus' most notable opponents. This is especially true in Galilee where, partly carried over from Mark's narrative and partly due to Luke's own device, the Pharisees and Jesus appear to be competing for control of the local society, each through the popularity of their interpretation and practice.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Nolland, 2:874-879, esp. 879 where Nolland writes: "To read our parable well requires a positive starting image for Pharisee and a negative starting image for tax collector . . . Luke invites us to see the judgment expressed at the end of the parable in connection with a process of reversal." I was first introduced to the possibility of the 'reversal interpretation' of this pericope by K. Yinger in his class on the *Gospel of Luke*.

⁷⁸ For Luke's use of Jerusalem in the structure of his two works, see Johnson, *Luke*, 14-15, and *Acts*, 10-11.

⁷⁹ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 178.

In Acts, a few Pharisees emerge as leaders in Jerusalem. Luke portrays one Pharisee, Gamaliel, as a prominent member of the Sanhedrin who is “honored by all the people” (Acts 5:34). This man holds so much influence, according to Luke’s account, that he is able to spare the lives of Peter and some other apostles single-handedly (Acts 5:33-40). Other Pharisaic members of the Sanhedrin come to Paul’s defense when he identifies himself as a Pharisee and claims that he is being persecuted for believing that God raises the dead (Acts 23:6-9). How one became a member of the prestigious council is not known, but it appears to have put its constituents in association with the high priest.⁸⁰ These Pharisees, of course, would not embody the picture of the average Pharisee, as any member of the Sanhedrin would have likely been exceptional; but it does demonstrate that Luke believed the Pharisees had representation among the upper echelons of Jewish society. They do not, however, rule the Sanhedrin. Pharisaic support of Paul does not end with his acquittal. It only prompts a vicious debate which causes the Romans to remove Paul from the setting (Acts 23:10). Luke also places Sadducees in the council (Acts 23:6), and calls the high priest the leader of the people (Acts 23:4-5). This seems to argue against the idea that Luke has simply rearranged the Jewish power structure in light of a post-70 situation that favored Pharisees, if such a situation ever existed.

The early church of Acts encounters more opposition from the Sadducees than from the Pharisees because the Sadducees oppose the doctrine of resurrection which is central to the church’s teaching (e.g. 4:1-2; 5:17; 23:6-8). Paul exploits the Pharisees’ belief in resurrection in Acts 23:6, but the issue places the church and the Pharisees on similar theological ground, opening up the possibility for alliances.⁸¹ In Acts, it appears that Pharisaism and Christianity are compatible enough that Luke refers to some Christians as “from the school of the Pharisees”

⁸⁰ On the Sanhedrin, see G. H. Twelftree, “Sanhedrin,” in *DNTB*, eds. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1061-1065.

⁸¹ See Bruce, 452-453.

(ἀπὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων; 15:5), and Paul, though a Christian, can claim before the Sanhedrin to be a current Pharisee (23:6).⁸² In Luke's gospel, Jesus is invited to dinner by Pharisees on three occasions (Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1). All of this suggests that some continuity existed between the two groups, and it suggests that the four evangelists' preoccupation with the Pharisees has roots in their similarities as well as their differences, and perhaps instead of Pharisaic control of Palestine, either before or after 70 C.E.

Luke's portrayal of Paul introduces other issues which relate to the nature and influence of Pharisaism. Luke's Paul claims he was born in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3) and that he is the "son of Pharisees" (υἱὸς Φαρισαίων; 23:6). If Paul means that he was born into a family with Pharisaic lineage, this would put the reach of Pharisaism beyond Palestine and into diaspora Judaism, something that Matthew's gospel might corroborate (Matt. 23:15). It is difficult to know, however, whether Paul is a Pharisee because of his upbringing in Tarsus or his alleged training under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3).⁸³ The phrase Luke's Paul uses to describe himself, as a "son of Pharisees," could refer to the teachers which supplied him with spiritual formation in Jerusalem, making the existence of Pharisees outside Palestine less certain. Paul's trip into Syria to hunt Christians among the Damascus synagogues (Acts 9) does not necessarily say anything about the reach and influence of Pharisaism either. Paul may have requested the assignment not because he was a Pharisee, but because he held a personal vendetta against the

⁸² By calling the Pharisaic Christians of 15:5 "ἀπὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων," Luke may mean that they were philosophically disposed to Pharisaic theology and not that they were Christian Pharisees (i.e. Pharisees by vocation, status, or whatever made one a Pharisee). Luke uses these Pharisaic Christians as opponents of Gentile Christianity. The context of Paul's statement, "ἐγὼ Φαρισαῖός εἰμι," demands that it be understood as a current claim (even if this conclusion cannot be reached firmly through the present-tense verb; see Porter, 20-26, 28-35); otherwise, the Pharisees' defense of Paul would make no sense.

⁸³ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 142, notes that Paul's letters mention nothing about being a Roman citizen, a leader in the Jewish community, or his education in Jerusalem.

church (Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1; 22:4).⁸⁴ Interestingly, Paul goes to Damascus only after acquiring letters of recommendation from the high priest (Acts 9:1b-2; 22:5), not on his own authority as a Pharisee, nor with letters of recommendation from ranking Pharisees. Luke's Paul, however, does mention something that could suggest the Pharisaic name was somewhat popular. When he claims to have been a Pharisee before Herod Agrippa, he qualifies the group by saying that they are "the most accurate school" (τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν; 26:5).⁸⁵ This seems to reflect Paul's belief about the Pharisees (Phil. 3:5), and it seems likely that this statement taps into Luke's conception of the Pharisees' reputation among the Jewish people.

Luke's later, Christian Paul works as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3; cf. 1 Cor. 9:6; 1 Thes. 2:9), an occupation which would make him a part of the lower, artisan class.⁸⁶ Paul the tentmaker stands in stark contrast to the earlier, Pharisaic Paul who acts as an agent of the Sanhedrin (Acts 9:1-2).⁸⁷ It is not clear whether tent-making was a new skill he acquired as a Christian, or if it was a skill he already possessed as a Pharisee. If he already was a tentmaker, this could either mean that some Pharisees remained in the lower social classes, or that some were recruited and trained from there. It is possible that his persecution of the church gave him a way of building a relationship with the high priest and the Sanhedrin, a relationship which he may have sought to

⁸⁴ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 142, argues that Luke's picture Paul's persecution of the church (9:1-2; 13-14; 22:4) is unlikely because the kind of violent persecution of the church described in Acts did not happen until later in the first century, and he suggests that it would have been actually more similar to the type of persecution that Paul claims to have received himself in 2 Cor. 11:24, 26, consisting of lashings and excommunication; he also refers his readers to A. J. Hultgren, "Paul's Pre-Christian Persecution of the Church: Their Purpose, Locale, and Nature," *JBL* 95 (1976): 107-109. However, only one of these references from Acts actually attributes any deaths to Paul's persecution (22:4), and this could refer to Stephen (7:59). Furthermore, offering some support for deadly violence in earlier persecutions, Paul also claims to have been stoned in 2 Cor. 11:25. Finally, lashing someone 39 times is a violent act. It cannot be determined, however, how Paul's relationship with Pharisaism affected his actions against the church, or how many other Pharisees were involved.

⁸⁵ Cf. Acts 22:3 where Paul says that he was brought up "κατὰ ἀκριβειαν τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου."

⁸⁶ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 139-140, 143.

⁸⁷ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 139-140, 142.

launch himself into higher community status.⁸⁸ Whether he was originally from the lower class or not, Acts does not picture the Pharisaic Paul working on his own authority, but in relation to higher powers. Paul the Pharisee, therefore, looks like a part of the retainer class in Acts.⁸⁹

In summary, Luke's gospel portrays the Pharisees as a part of the higher classes in Jewish society. They are not the leaders, per se, but they do hold a comfortable amount of influence and money. They are part of the crowd that rejects Jesus due to their own comfort and will find themselves on the disappointing side of the "great reversal." As in Mark's gospel, they compete with Jesus for the control of local religious practices. They are completely absent from the Jerusalem narratives, unless Luke has cryptically alluded to them in 20:20, and they are not mentioned in connection with Jesus' death. Acts, however, does place them inside the city, even in roles of power. Their common belief in the resurrection makes it more possible for them to ally themselves with the church, and might explain the presence of some Christians with a Pharisaic inclination (Acts 15:5). The Pharisaic Paul persecutes the church, but not necessarily because he is a Pharisee. While pursuing Christians, Paul seeks legitimacy from the Sanhedrin, making him look like a member of the retainer class, even though his later occupational choice makes him look like an artisan.

5. *Pharisees in the Gospel of John*

Much confusion exists over "John" and his gospel. It has often been observed that John's gospel is very different from the synoptic gospels, containing, for instance: a two or three year

⁸⁸ It is not clear whether Luke intended to portray Paul as a member of the Sanhedrin or a member of the "Freemen Synagogue," if either. Paul enters Acts (8:1) in relation to the trial and stoning of Stephen (6:12-7:59). Initially, it is the "Freemen Synagogue," including Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Asia, and Cilicia that oppose Stephen (6:9). They later bring him to the Sanhedrin (6:12) where he is stoned (7:59). Since Tarsus is in Cilicia, Paul's access to Stephen's martyrdom may have been through the "Freemen Synagogue" and not the Sanhedrin at all. Thus it is not impossible that Paul created connections to the Sanhedrin after the death of Stephen by continuing the persecution of the church for the benefit of his own social status.

⁸⁹ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 142.

ministry as opposed to a single year, several trips to Jerusalem as opposed to just one, long discourses about the transcendent nature of Jesus' person and mission as opposed to parabolic teachings about the kingdom of God, and a meal in the upper room on the eve of Passover feast as opposed to a meal on the day of the Passover feast.⁹⁰ Early in the life of the Christian church, the gospel was suspected of holding something more than simple history. Eusebius records that Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 C.E.) defended its historicity (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.24.11-14), but also dubbed it "a spiritual gospel" induced via the Holy Spirit (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.7). Since then, many other scholars have struggled with its relationship to the other gospels and history, sometimes proposing that it offers a spiritual, behind-the-scenes look at Jesus.⁹¹ Nonetheless, recent scholarship has recognized that, since there is a good chance that the gospel comes from a separate strain of Jesus traditions, it has a great deal of historical value.⁹² A minority of scholars attempt to date John to before 70 C.E., but most would date its final form to between 90 and 100 C.E.⁹³

John mentions the Pharisees by name twenty times.⁹⁴ John's Pharisees generally seem to wield more power than the synoptic Pharisees. They have almost no religious competition below the chief priests. The Sadducees do not exist, and the scribes, which were so authoritative in the synoptic gospels (especially Mark), appear only once in John's gospel (8:3) in a pericope added to a later edition (7:53-8:11).⁹⁵ The Pharisees even have the authority to send out priests and Levites to question John the Baptist about his ministry (1:19, 24; cf. 1:19-25). Unlike the synoptic gospels where the Pharisees' influence is most obvious in Galilee, John's Pharisees

⁹⁰ See G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), xxxii-xxxvii; and R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 1:xli-li.

⁹¹ See Beasley-Murray, xxxv-liii.

⁹² See Brown, 1:xxxiv-li; and Beasley-Murray, xlv-liii.

⁹³ See Beasley-Murray, lxxv-lxxvii.

⁹⁴ John 1:24; 3:1; 4:1; 7:32 (x2), 45, 47, 48; 8:3, 13; 9:13, 15, 16, 40; 11:46, 47, 57; 12:19, 42, 18:3.

⁹⁵ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 187-188.

consistently appear in Judea.⁹⁶ Once, Jesus even flees to Galilee to avoid them (4:1-3). This picture might support some late first-century situation, but it is also possible that John has simplified the sociological structures of Palestine and uses the name of the Pharisees to represent religious opposition to Jesus in general, perhaps to make his gospel more readable.⁹⁷

Reminiscent of Matthew 21:45, John aligns the Pharisees with the chief priests on several occasions. In John 7:32, the Pharisees and chief priests together send out some attendants to arrest Jesus because the crowds were entertaining the idea that Jesus might be the Christ. In John 11:47-53, after people inform the Pharisees about Lazarus' resurrection, the Pharisees and the chief priests meet together in council (συνέδριον = Sanhedrin?) and, because they are concerned that his popularity will bring Roman destruction upon them, they decide that Jesus should die. In 11:57, the Pharisees and chief priests together charge the people to expose Jesus' whereabouts, if known, so that they might arrest him. In 18:3, the last time the Pharisees are mentioned in John's gospel, Judas leads a group which has been assembled by the Pharisees and chief priests to arrest Jesus. Interestingly, each of these four occurrences mentions a plot to arrest or kill Jesus, and only in these four passages does John combine the Pharisees with such plots. This might suggest that John did not believe that the Pharisees had the civic ability to arrest or kill Jesus on their own, needing to rely on the support and authority of the chief priests.⁹⁸

Their control of the synagogue, the place of popular religion, appears to be the seat of power for John's Pharisees.⁹⁹ In John 9:13, people take a man healed on the Sabbath to the Pharisees for examination. During the investigation, the Pharisees also question the man's parents (9:18-22), but because they fear expulsion from the synagogue they refuse to support

⁹⁶ Cf. Stemberger, 34.

⁹⁷ See Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 98, 100-104; Stemberger, 36-37; and Saldarini, Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 195-196.

⁹⁸ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 188, 191.

⁹⁹ See Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 101-104; and Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 194-195.

their son (9:22).¹⁰⁰ The Pharisees' control over the synagogue is so thorough that even some of the rulers are afraid that they would be expelled if they were to confess a belief in Jesus (12:42). As leaders of the synagogue, John's Pharisees command respect and they appear to want to keep it that way. They claim to be Moses' disciples because they know that his authority came from God, contrasting him to Jesus for whom they had no proof of authority (9:29; cf. 8:13). John's Jesus, however, begins to undercut their authority as he becomes more popular than they are, and the Pharisees sigh to themselves, "You profit nothing; the world goes after him" (12:19). It seems that fear of losing popular control leads them to meet with the chief priests and plot Jesus' death in John 11:45-53, an action they justify by reasoning that Jesus' popularity could bring the Romans' wrath upon them all (11:48).¹⁰¹

In John 7:48, some Pharisees boast that not one of the rulers or the Pharisees believes Jesus, but Nicodemus quickly cracks that image (7:50-52). Nicodemus is a Pharisee who seeks Jesus out in John 3 to ask him questions. Besides his Pharisaic ties, he is also called "a ruler of the Jews" (ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων; 3:1), and John's Jesus criticizes his ignorance because Nicodemus is supposed to be "a teacher of Israel" (διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ; 3:10). Nicodemus seems representative of John's Pharisees in all ways but one: his positive interest in Jesus which

¹⁰⁰ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 192-193, suggests that "the Jews" (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) of verse 22 represent a different governing group than the Pharisees (contra Brown, 1:373). It appears, however, that John uses "οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι" variously to refer to several groups, often to the rulers (e.g. 1:19 with 1:24; 9:18; 19:12, 14 with 19:15), but also to the Jewish people in general (e.g. 11:45; 19:40). It seems that the author uses the phrase almost like a personal pronoun, making whoever the nearest group in his literature "οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι" which is for him a little more specific than "they" or "them." In the case of 9:22, then, "οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι" would refer to the Pharisees. Suggesting that "οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι" represents a nondescript governing group would help rectify the problematic portrayal of Pharisaic control, but it is quite possible that John's Pharisees already represent a nondescript group of religious leaders who are only "Pharisees" by name, simplified for the sake of John's audience. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 193, notes that the "scribes" and "elders" of the synoptic gospels have been absorbed into John's Pharisees, and there seems no reason to stop there.

¹⁰¹ See Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 194.

prompts him to defend the Galilean among his colleagues (7:50-52) and bury him after his death (19:39).¹⁰²

In summary, it is possible that John's Pharisees reflect a later historical situation, or that their name has become iconic so that it represents any and all organized religious opposition to Jesus' ministry. Of all the groups known from the synoptic gospels, only the chief priests seem to remain independent of the Pharisees' power. Indeed, the chief priests seem to possess more civic power than the Pharisees because, while the Pharisees dislike Jesus, they always ally themselves with the chief priests when attempting to arrest him. John's Pharisees function in Judea, and they rule the synagogues with so much authority that the rulers fear exclusion if they disagree with them. John's Pharisees are concerned about Jesus' popularity, fearing that it will undercut their own authority and, possibly, bring Roman destruction.

C. Conclusion to the Pharisees in the New Testament

The New Testament primarily remembers the Pharisees as a religious group which wrestled with Jesus of Nazareth for influence and control (e.g. Mark 2:16-3:5 and pars.; John 11:45-47). The gospels record that Jesus promotes a different program of piety, with different boundary markers than other religious leaders/groups, including the Pharisees. His popularity and audacity make Jesus a threat to the religious establishment in the gospels, and the Pharisees respond by challenging him, apparently to curb his influence and restore the prominence of their own program. It may at least be said that the Pharisees and Jesus' followers were in a sociological and religious competition by 75 C.E., as a late date for Mark 2:16-3:6 and 7:1-5, but there seems to be little reason to deny all historical connection to Jesus' life and ministry. In fact, it seems quite unreasonable to deny any historical reality in the evangelists' portrayal of the

¹⁰² Cf. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 189-190.

Pharisees. Paul the Pharisee, for example, seems to support the gospel's picture a bit because he had significant interpretive differences with the Jesus movement which, in Paul's case, served as a basis for him to persecute Christians in the 30's C.E. While, again, it cannot be supposed that Paul's actions were typical, it may be said that something was brewing between the two movements in the early years of the Christian movement. The gospel traditions report that Jesus' program of Jewish piety caused conflict between him and other Jewish leaders, eventually contributing to his crucifixion at the hands of the Romans. The gospels' claims come several years after the reported events and cannot prove that the Pharisees were among those opposing groups, but nothing demands that the portrayal is a fabrication unless someone assumes (from silence or, perhaps, another source) that the Pharisees actually responded differently than reported.

Mark's portrayal is less dramatic than Matthew's, Luke's, and John's, and might serve as a basis for assuming that a post-70 situation prompted the later evangelists' preoccupation with the Pharisees. It is, perhaps, equally or simultaneously possible, however, that the later evangelists focused on the Pharisees so much because they were already featured prominently in the Jesus traditions. Luke's gospel, for instance, often pits Jesus against the Pharisees (e.g. 5:17-6:7; 7:36-43; 11:37-44, 53; 12:1; 14:1-6; 15:2 16:14; 19:39), but does so less in Acts (e.g. 8:1; 9:1-2; 15:5) which might indicate that his sources (including Mark and Q, but probably also others) contained more "Pharisee vs. Jesus" stories than his sources for Acts. This need not necessarily be a later invention of the church, possibly being a genuine memory of Jesus' relationship with the group or members from the group. The growth of Pharisaic prominence in the later gospels, especially John, need not be (entirely) due to the growth of the real Pharisaic movement in a post-70 situation. It could be (partly) due to the exaggeration and simplification

of an infamous shadow of memory based on the actual Pharisees. Some of the information offered by the New Testament (Mark 7:1; Luke 7:36; 11:37; Acts 15:5; 23:6-9) even suggests that the Pharisees and the Jesus movement were somewhat closely related, which may have served as another reason for their prominent role in New Testament literature.

The New Testament seems to assume that the Pharisees were privy to some level of popularity among many of the Jewish people (e.g. Phil. 3:5; Matt. 5:20 [mirror reading]; 23:2-3a; Luke 18:10-14 [mirror reading]; Acts 26:5), and sometimes alludes that the groups practices were not all that unusual in (Galilean) society (e.g. Mark 2:16-3:5 and pars.; 7:3), possibly suggesting that they had some religious influence among the masses. The New Testament reports that individual Pharisees were seated in positions of civic authority (Acts 5:34; 23:6), but usually it limits the group's social power by attaching them to other groups or organizations when taking civic action concerning Jesus or his followers (e.g. Mark 3:6; 12:13; Matt. 21:45; John 7:32; 11:46-50; 11:57; 18:3; Acts 5:21-40; 7:54-8:1a; 9:1-2; 22:30-23:9; however, Matt. 12:14; 22:15-16; Acts 8:1b). The Pharisees are not even mentioned in the passion narratives. In general, the New Testament picture presumes that the Pharisees were somewhat prominent and influential in everyday religious life, and somewhat popular among the people, but not really politically powerful.

CHAPTER FIVE

RABBINIC LITERATURE AND PHARISEES

A. The Rabbis and the Limitations of Rabbinic Material on the Pharisees

In the past, scholars typically equated the teachings found in rabbinic literature with Pharisaic teaching because they assumed that the rabbis were Pharisees or the direct heirs of Pharisaism.¹ There are, however, certain problems with taking such a stance. In a critique of many earlier studies, Saldarini writes:

Most presentations of the Pharisees have sought to overcome the slim second Temple evidence by an appeal to the abundance of rabbinic literature, even though these sources date from later centuries and do not purport to be historical. Such a naïve reading of rabbinic literature as a first-century source is based on the presuppositions that 1. rabbis of the second and third centuries are a later form of Pharisees; 2. there was little change over time in their way of life (even after the destruction of the Temple); 3. accounts of second Temple events and institutions recounted one to six centuries later are both informed and unbiased; and 4. rabbinic literature, which does not attempt to present a history of Pharisaism, gives enough information for an adequate understanding of the Pharisees.²

Other scholars share similar concerns.³ As Saldarini suggests above, the late dating of the literature is part of the difficulty in making a firm connection. The Mishnah, the earliest literary piece from the rabbis and the foundation for most of their subsequent contributions, was probably compiled around the beginning of the third century C.E.⁴ The Tosefta may have been

¹ E.g. Herford, *The Pharisees*, 52; A. T. Robertson, *The Pharisees and Jesus: The Stone Lectures for 1915-16* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920); Smith, 76-77; and Maccoby, *Revolution*, 56-57.

² Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 7-8.

³ E.g. Stemberger, 140-147; Sievers, "Who were the Pharisees?" 138; Meier, "Quest," 713-714, 721-722; and Mason, "Pharisees," in *DNTB*, eds. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 785-786. Cf. Bowker, 1, who argues, 3-52, for continuity with Josephus' Pharisees but not the gospels' Pharisees.

⁴ Neusner, *The Oral Torah: The Sacred Books of Judaism: An Introduction* (San Francisco, et al.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 1.

completed as early as ca. 250 C.E. or as late as ca. 400 C.E.⁵ There are two Talmuds: the Jerusalem Talmud which may have been completed ca. 400 C.E., and the Babylonian Talmud which was completed between 500 and 600 C.E.⁶ Other rabbinic literary contributions, including midrashic literature, were likewise made from the third century on. Even if the rabbis did stem directly from the Pharisees, the amount of time that passed and the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. make it possible that their concerns and perspectives changed.⁷ Undoubtedly, the rabbis' historical setting and the needs of their community helped shape their selection of traditions for the Mishnah and other texts. While no one is willing to say that the rabbis were in no way related to the Pharisees, many scholars now suspect that the Pharisees were not the only group that contributed to the rabbinic literature and that, even when they did, their contributions may not have always reflected the pre-70 concerns of the group. Saldarini continues:

1. It is very likely that the pre-70 Pharisees contributed to the emergence of post-70 rabbis, but evidence is not abundant. The tannaitic authors of the earliest rabbinic sources did not identify themselves as Pharisees and many other components of the Jewish community and tradition besides Pharisaism contributed to the form Judaism took in the centuries after the destruction of the Temple. 2. Even granted some kind of continuity between the Pharisees and rabbis, the loss of the Temple, of the Jerusalem leadership and of clear political identity which went with them caused major adjustments to the Jewish understanding of the world as well as its symbolic system, behavioral patterns and values. 3. More importantly, rabbinic literature (Mishnah, Tosefta, the two Talmuds and the midrashic collections) and the traditions collected there are enormously varied in genre, purpose, date and origin. Many traditions about the Pharisees, Sadducees and other second Temple institutions, laws, events and people bear the clear marks of later interests and outlooks. Even rules for festivals and sacrifices in the Temple cannot be surely related to the first century because they reflect later scholars' views of how

⁵ Neusner, *Oral Torah* (1986), 37, sets the Tosefta's date at ca. 400 C.E., but in "Rabbinic Literature: Mishnah and Tosefta," in *DNTB*, eds. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 895, he sets its date at ca. 250 C.E.

⁶ Neusner, *Oral Torah*, 68-69.

⁷ Recently, the wholesale harvest of religious ideas from rabbinic texts for insight on the pre-70 Jewish community (e.g. H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 vols. [München: Beck, 1924-1961]) has begun to give way to more critical studies which seek to designate traditions which most reliably predate the destruction of the temple (e.g. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70*, 3 vols. [1971]; and D. Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament*, vol. 1, *Prayer and Agriculture* [Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2004]).

things ought to have been. 4. Finally, even if some reliable traditions can be isolated, they are strikingly incomplete and reflect the rabbinic authors' lack of interest in history.⁸

In short, it is becoming increasingly difficult to know how rabbinic literature is related to Pharisaism and which parts might be utilized to reconstruct an accurate first-century picture.⁹

Modern scholarship on the Pharisees is indebted to the work of Neusner and Rivkin for the methodologies that they developed to study the Pharisees in rabbinic literature. Neusner studied several of the men named in the rabbinic texts by sorting through the material, determining which traditions should be applied to which man, and cataloguing developments within the traditions.¹⁰ Rivkin focused on the rabbis' use of the word פרושין, developed criteria to distinguish between its usage for the Pharisees and other usages, looked for synonyms for פרושין that might also refer to the Pharisees, and then used the results to build a system to define Pharisaism.¹¹ While neither scholar's results have been fully accepted, their work, in some form, has been used in several subsequent studies.¹² Given the vast amount of rabbinic literature and the trouble of sorting through it for specific traditions about the Pharisees, this paper will also rely, largely, on the work started by these two scholars, though certain considerations from later scholars will ultimately modify the number of Pharisaic texts delimited by Neusner and Rivkin. First, traditions about individual Pharisees will be examined, and then traditions about the פרושין.

B. Known Pharisees in Rabbinic Literature

⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 8-9.

⁹ Cf. Stemmerger, 140-147, who writes: "The main problem in the investigation of the continuum from the Pharisees to Rabbis is rabbinic literature. The early texts barely document the rabbinic heritage; in fact, they appear rather to conceal it" (142).

¹⁰ See especially Neusner's *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (3 vols. [1971]).

¹¹ See Rivkin, "Defining the Pharisees: The Tannaitic Sources," *HUCA* 40 (1969): 205-249.

¹² E.g., Dunn (e.g. pp. 62-65), Sievers (e.g. "Who were the Pharisees?" 141, 144), Saldarini (e.g. *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 206-207); and Meier (e.g. *Marginal Jew*, 3:318-321, 377 n. 133, 379 n. 138) all depended on Neusner's work to some extent; and Bowker (see p. 5 n. 1); Stemmerger (see p. 40); and Meier (e.g. *Marginal Jew*, 3:305-309) all applied a modified/partial version of Rivkin's methodology to the rabbinic texts.

No individual is clearly designated as a Pharisee (or פרוש) in rabbinic literature.¹³ This forces investigators who wish to research a Pharisaic individual to do one of two things: either assume a connection between the Pharisees and the rabbis while focusing on a named individual in the rabbinic text (i.e. Hillel, Shammai, Gamaliel, Simeon b. Gamaliel, or Johanan b. Zakkai), or find individuals who are known as Pharisees outside of rabbinic literature, assume that they are correctly identified there, and transpose that designation to the same or similar name inside rabbinic literature. At the present time, given such uncertainty about the rabbis' connection to the Pharisees, the latter option seems to be the safest methodology.

In his recent essay, Sievers places the number of known Pharisees from Josephus' works and the New Testament at twelve.¹⁴ Of these twelve, he notes that possibly only three are found in rabbinic literature: (1) Pollion (*Ant.* 15.3, 370) with his disciple, Samaias (*Ant.* 15.3); (2) Gamaliel I (Acts 5:34); and (3) Simeon b. Gamaliel I (*Life* 191).¹⁵ The rabbinic connection to Pollion and Samaias, however, is extremely precarious.¹⁶ For example, Solomon Zeitlin believed that Josephus inconsistently used the name "Samaias," using it for both Shammai and Shemaiah, which he further used as justification to identify Josephus' "Pollion" with the rabbinic Hillel.¹⁷ Louis H. Feldman, assuming that Josephus' Pollion and Samaias should also be found in rabbinic literature, sought to identify them with Abtalion and Shemaiah,¹⁸ even though rabbinic literature never portrays Shemaiah as Abtalion's disciple, nor connects either of them to Herod.¹⁹ Neusner argues that the only correlation that exists between Josephus' Pollion and

¹³ Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 139, though he reserves judgment on Judah b. Gedidiah in *b. Qidd.* 66a.

¹⁴ Sievers, "Who were the Pharisees?" 138. S. J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *HUCA* 55 (1985): 36, places the number at eleven.

¹⁵ Sievers, "Who were the Pharisees?" 140-141, 143-144, 148-151.

¹⁶ See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:5, 115, 159.

¹⁷ S. Zeitlin, "Sameias and Pollion," *Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy* 1 (1919): 61-67.

¹⁸ L. H. Feldman, "The Identity of Pollion, the Pharisee, in Josephus," *JQR* 49 (1958): 53-62.

¹⁹ This objection comes from Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:5, 159.

Samaia's and the rabbinic texts is a zealous desire to find them and a meager similarity in names.²⁰ Assuming that Neusner is correct, this leaves Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I as the only individuals in rabbinic literature who are designated as Pharisees in other sources.²¹ This study, therefore, will start with the traditions about these two men.

Rabbinic literature contains two Gamaliels and two Simeon b. Gamaliels: Gamaliel I, from the pre-70 years, Simeon I, Gamaliel I's son from the period of the Jewish revolt, Gamaliel II, Gamaliel I's grandson, and Simeon b. Gamaliel II, Gamaliel I's great-grandson from the period of Yavneh. The two Gamaliels and the two Simeon b. Gamaliels are not always clearly distinguished from one another making it extremely difficult to isolate traditions about the pre-70 men known as Pharisees. Nonetheless, Neusner has identified twenty-six traditions in forty-one pericopae which probably refer to Gamaliel I,²² and seven traditions in thirteen pericopae which

²⁰ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:5, 159. J. N. Epstein, *Mevo 'ot le-Sifrut ha-Tannaim*, (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Magnas and Dvir, 1957), 55, suggests Simeon b. Shethah (*b. Sanh.* 19) as a candidate for Samaia's because he challenges "King Yannai" who could have replaced Herod in the tradition; but Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:115, also believes that this correlation is forced.

²¹ Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 81, states this explicitly.

²² See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:341-376. In *m. Pe'a* 2:6 Gamaliel is addressed but does not contribute to a discussion about the number of field corners that one should leave at harvest; in *m. 'Or.* 2:12 he discusses the purity of dough when impure yeast has been added; *m. Šeqal.* 3:3 records how his house, the House of Gamaliel, gives its heave offering; *m. Šeqal.* 6:1 records that the House of Gamaliel makes fourteen prostrations in the temple; *m. Sukk.* 2:5 (cf. *b. Yoma* 79a) briefly records that one time food was brought to him during the Feast of Tabernacles; in *m. Roš Haš.* 2:5 Gamaliel decrees that witnesses to the new moon who are stuck in Jerusalem's courtyard on a Sabbath may walk up to two-thousand cubits; in *m. Yebam.* 16:7 (cf. *b. Yebam.* 115a) he argues that a widow may remarry by the testimony of one witness; in *m. Ketub.* 13:3-5 (cf. *m. B. Bat.* 9:1; *t. Ketub.* 12:4; *y. Ketub.* 13:5 [Amoraic]; *b. Ketub.* 109a [Amoraic]) Gamaliel approves of several of Admon's teachings; *m. Sota.* 9:15 (see also *b. Meg.* 21a below) honorifically comments on the negative effects of Gamaliel's death; in *m. Git.* 4:2a (cf. *y. B. Bat.* 10:4) Gamaliel modifies the method of annulling divorces; in *m. Git.* 4:2b he modifies the method of recording names on a bill of divorce; in *m. Git.* 4:3 he makes a decree about oaths between widows and orphans; in *t. Šabb.* 13:2 (cf. *y. Šabb.* 16:1; *b. Šabb.* 115a) he requests that the *Targum of Job* be hidden under rubble; *t. Sanh.* 2:6 (*y. Ma'as Š.* 5:4; *y. Sanh.* 1:2; *b. Sanh.* 11) records that he wrote letters concerning the addition of thirty days to calendar; in *t. 'Abod. Zar.* 3:10 he gives his daughter to a (son of a?) priest and agrees that she should not prepare clean things; *t. 'Abod. Zar.* 4:9 records a testimony about him giving permission to drink wine from Gentile bottles; in *y. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:9 [Amoraic] he sees a beautiful Gentile woman and blesses God (but in *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 20a [Amoraic] it is Simeon b. Gamaliel); *b. Ber.* 34b records that when Gamaliel's son became ill he sends two disciples to Hania b. Dosa, a miracle worker; in *b. Ber.* 43b Gamaliel comments on a debate between Hillel and Shammai over oil and myrtle, siding with Shammai; *b. Pesah.* 88b records that a king (Herod Agrippa?) and queen depend on Gamaliel for instructions about purity; *b. Meg.* 21a expands upon *m. Sota.* 9:15 by saying that after Gamaliel's death people began to sit to read the Torah; in *b. Bek.* 38a (and *Sipra Šemini-Paraša* 7:4) Gamaliel II receives testimony about Gamaliel I's teachings on the purity of earthen wares; in *'Abot R. Nat.* 15 a proselyte of Hillel has two sons

probably refer to Simeon b. Gamaliel I.²³ From among these, this paper will consider a few of the more promising pericopae for the Pharisees role in first century.

The rabbis remembered Gamaliel as a man of wisdom and influence. He may have even had his own following of disciples, something the phrase “the house of Rabban Gamaliel” (בית רבן גמליאל; *m. Šeqal.* 3:3; 6:1) seems to suggest.²⁴ A few traditions record that he had concerns about ritual purity (*m. ‘Or.* 2:12; *t. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3:10; 4:9; *b. Ber.* 43b; *b. Pesah.* 88b; *b. Bek.* 38a // *Sipra Šemini-Paraša* 7:4), which Neusner sees as one of the hallmarks of Pharisaism.²⁵ While these traditions support the idea that the Pharisees were concerned about ritual purity, they do not offer enough to determine whether this concern was uniquely Pharisaic, nor that the later rabbis picked up their teachings about ritual purity from the Pharisees.

Most of the Gamaliel I traditions are too ambiguous to supply adequate information about the Pharisees to create a reconstruction. *B. Pesahim* 88b suggests that a king and queen sought his help when they had a question about ritual purity. The intended king in this pericope may be Herod Agrippa.²⁶ If this pericope records an authentic situation, it would seem that ritual purity was a concern for people beyond the confines of the Pharisaic movement, or that the Pharisees’ concern for ritual purity had spread to the Herodians. Neusner, however, doubts that this reveals

and names one Gamaliel; in *‘Abot R. Nat.* 40 Gamaliel defines four kinds of disciples; in *Mek. R. Simeon b. Yohai* he comments on God’s jealousy; and in *Sipra to Deut.* 61 he exhorts people not to live like Gentiles and so cause the destruction of the temple. Also, though it is not mentioned in Neusner’s list (*Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:342-369, see esp. 364-367), *m. Abot* 1:16 places Gamaliel I in or near the passing of rabbinic traditions (1:1-2:8), for Neusner’s discussion on Gamaliel I in *m. Abot* 1:1-1:18 see *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:15-23.

²³ See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 377-388. In *m. ‘Erub.* 6:2 (cf. *b. ‘Erub.* 68b) Simeon b. Gamaliel I shares an alley with a Sadducee; in *m. Abot* 1:17-18 (cf. *Midr. Lev. R.* 16:5 [Amoraic]) he advocates silence; in *m. Ker.* 1:7 (cf. *Sipra Tazri ‘a* 3:7) he reduces the price of doves in a day; *t. Sukk.* 4:4 (cf. *y. Sukk.* 5:4; *b. Sukk.* 5:3a) presents him as an entertainer; in *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 20a [Amoraic] he sees a beautiful Gentile woman (but *y. ‘Abod. Zar.* 1.9 [Amoraic] records that it was Gamaliel); in *Sipra Qedošim* 2:4 Gamaliel II comments on the custom of Simeon b. Gamaliel I’s giving of *pe’a*; *Midr. Tannaim to Deut.* 26:13 writes two letters about the calendar and tithing (cf. Gamaliel I’s letters in *t. Sanh.* 2:6 and pars.).

²⁴ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:376.

²⁵ Despite these references, Neusner believes that the majority of Gamaliel I traditions focus on his civic contributions apart from the Pharisees see Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:376.

²⁶ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:363.

any real information about Gamaliel and his relationship to the Herodians.²⁷ He believes that it better conforms to the situation of the Babylonian rabbis and their relationship with their ruler.²⁸ Given the late appearance of literary reference (ca. 500-600 C.E.), there is little to suggest that Neusner is incorrect. Certainly, no information could be taken safely from the pericope about the pre-70 Pharisees' relationship to Palestinian society or to the Herodians.

M. Gittin 4:2 appears, due to the use of the phrase “beforetime [or “at first”] one used to...” (בראשונה היה)²⁹ to suggest that Gamaliel modified two common social practices: he decreed that divorces may only be annulled in the city in which it was issued instead of through a tribunal in any city (4:2a), and he devised a way of writing names on certificates of divorce so that every alias the individual used was addressed (4:2b). This could be interpreted as a case when a leading Pharisee reformed two problematic issues in society through his influence. Neusner, however, disbelieves that Jewish society would have waited until the time of Gamaliel to implement such safety features, and also that a Pharisee would have possessed enough power to change social practice at large.³⁰ He suggests, therefore, that Gamaliel's ordinances reached only into the ranks of the Pharisees, also arguing that the term “בראשונה” is merely “a formal convention” and a late addition to these pericopae.³¹ Unfortunately, there is no way of actually telling how revolutionary or far-reaching Gamaliel's decrees were in either of these cases. It is quite possible that, as Neusner suggests, the Pharisees had begun to take marital issues into their

²⁷ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:363.

²⁸ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:363.

²⁹ Danby (1933) translates it as “beforetime”; Blackman (1990) translates it once as “aforetime” (2a) and once as “beforetime” (2b); Neusner (*Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:352) translates it as “at first”; and Instone-Brewer (217) says that it can be translated as “in former times”, adding that it may be “a reference to times before 70 CE” here in *m. Git.* 4:2.

³⁰ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:353.

³¹ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:353, 355; he suggests that “בראשונה” is part of the standard formulation for traditions recorded at Yavneh (cf. *ibid.* p. 347).

own hands and this Gamaliel I tradition is exclusively Pharisaic.³² Such a Pharisaic tradition could have found its way into rabbinic literature whether the majority of rabbis were Pharisees or not, especially if it could be used to serve a practical purpose in the turmoil of the post-70 era. On the other hand, even if Gamaliel's decree affected the pre-70 social practices on a broad scale, it would be difficult to determine whether his status as an individual or his affiliation with the Pharisees made his ordinances so powerful.

M. Roš Haššana 2:5 seems to give Gamaliel a great deal of influence within the city of Jerusalem. This pericope records that there was a large courtyard in Jerusalem where witnesses would wait to testify about the new moon, thus helping those in authority adjust the calendar properly (see *m. Roš Haš.* 1:1-9). It further records that before ("בראשונה" is again used) Gamaliel's intervention, witnesses who entered the courtyard on the Sabbath used to remain motionless for the rest of the day. Gamaliel changes the ordinances so that they could walk two-thousand cubits in any direction. If his Sabbatical ordinances for new moon witnesses stretched beyond Pharisaic circles, it would seem to place him among the Jerusalem elite, perhaps even among those who set the Jewish calendar for the priests and people. This is possible, especially since it is here assumed that this Gamaliel is the same Gamaliel that Luke places in the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:34), but it is also possible that the Pharisees had their own, private methods for determining their calendar.³³ One way or the other, it is very unlikely that this pericope offers any information about how much control the Pharisees held over the Sabbath, the temple calendar, or even the courtyard where the witnesses waited.

Another tradition seems to give joint control of the/a calendar to Gamaliel (*t. Sanh.* 2:6 // *y. Ma'as Š.* 5:4 // *y. Sanh.* 1:2 // *b. Sanh.* 11). This tradition records an Aramaic letter written by

³² Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:353. Other possibilities are legion.

³³ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:347, entertains this idea, but he tentatively favors the notion that Gamaliel was a leading and respected member of the temple councils.

Gamaliel and (usually; cf. *b. Sanh.* 11b) some elders. It addresses people in Judea and Galilee, announcing that it is time to bring in their tithes. It also addresses people exiled in Babylonia, Medea, and elsewhere, informing them about a thirty day extension to the calendar. Gamaliel takes some credit for the decision about the calendar, but not all of it: “it is good in my view and in the view of my colleagues” (*t. Sanh.* 2:6e; cf. pars.).³⁴ The identity of these colleagues/elders is lost, making it possible that they are members of the Sanhedrin, temple administrators, or other Pharisees. Also, though the letters address various places in the Middle East, it is unknown whether the intended recipients (“our brothers”) were other Pharisees or Jewish people in general.³⁵ This ambiguity creates several possibilities, including one that suggests Pharisaic control of the temple calendar. Neusner, rejecting that Pharisees could have had so much power, favors the idea that Gamaliel wrote to Judea and Galilee to remind *other Pharisees* to bring in their special *Pharisaic tithes*, though he is unable to offer a reason for the additional information about the calendar since he is uncertain about Pharisees in the diaspora.³⁶ Neusner’s idea seems plausible, but his fears may be unnecessary in this case. Nothing here warrants the conclusion that Pharisees controlled the priesthood even if Gamaliel’s letter concerns the temple tithes and calendar. It is possible that Gamaliel, as a member of the Sanhedrin, worked together with the priests and other high ranking individuals in setting the calendar and then wrote these letters as a service to the temple administration.³⁷ If so, again, Gamaliel’s individual prestige may be more important in this case than his affiliation with the Pharisees. Unfortunately, too little information

³⁴ Translation Neusners in *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:357.

³⁵ See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:357.

³⁶ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:357-358; cf. Instone-Brewer, 357-358.

³⁷ However, Instone-Brewer, 357-358, argues that, since the meeting took place on the steps of the temple and not among the porticoes, the Pharisees are described as a lowly group in *t. San.* 2:6; from this sliver of evidence he speculates that Gamaliel was not yet a member of the Sanhedrin, though he still places him at the head of the Pharisaic movement. Instone-Brewer’s scenario is intriguing, but it does not seem conclusive.

exists to solve the questions raised by these texts without assuming their answers, and thus cannot supply any usable information about the Pharisees at the present time.

It is even more difficult to derive information about the Pharisees from the traditions about Simeon b. Gamaliel. He also wrote a letter about the calendar (*Midr. Tannaim to Deut.* 26:13), making it appear as though he was Gamaliel I's successor in some capacity. Just as before, however, it cannot be said whether his letter was only for other Pharisees or a more general audience. The tradition's existence can help establish that Simeon was a prominent man like his father, that his position once required him to inform other Jews (Pharisees or the common populace?) that it was time to bring confessional offerings, and that the later rabbis felt it would be somehow beneficial to record the event, but little else.³⁸

In *m. Keritot* 1:7 (cf. the par. in *Sipra Tazri'a* 3:7) it is written that he, within a day, successfully lobbied for a reduction in the price of doves used for sacrifice when a woman had miscarried five times. Neusner doubts that this tradition actually goes back to the time of Simeon because: first, he assumes that the court in which Simeon lobbied was a Pharisaic institution and subsequently doubts that the ruling of a Pharisaic court would have been accepted everywhere; and second, he rejects the idea that the priests would have permitted a woman who has miscarried to eat of the sacrifices as the pericope suggests.³⁹ Sanders views the story as an exaggeration, doubting that many women would miscarry five times within a year, but is more optimistic about the pericope's overall legitimacy.⁴⁰ In the end, however, even if this pericope is accepted as an authentic tradition having ramifications outside Pharisaic circles, it would only

³⁸ Simeon b. Gamaliel I's letter is written in conjunction with Jonathan b. Zakkai. If it could be proven that the letter was exclusively Pharisaic, then it might also establish that Jonathan b. Zakkai was also a Pharisee. However, like Gamaliel I's letters, the circumstances of its creation are not evident, making such a connection risky.

³⁹ See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:377-378, 380-381.

⁴⁰ Sanders, *Belief & Practice*, 89.

demonstrate that Simeon was an influential man, leaving unanswered the question as to how his Pharisaic ties contributed to his prestige.

No halakic teachings, about purity or anything else, are attributed to Simeon I by the rabbis.⁴¹ Neusner suggests that his halakic rulings were deemed unacceptable by the later rabbis.⁴² Rabbinic literature appears to favor Hillel over Shammai, and Neusner argues that both Simeon I and Gamaliel I were more aligned with the opinions of the more rigid Shammai, causing the rabbis to suppress their teachings.⁴³ This is possible (cf. *b. Ber.* 43b), but it is also possible that Simeon's teachings were unacceptable on their own terms. For example, *m. Besa* 2:6 attributes teachings to Simeon and his father which were more stringent than those from the House of Shammai, not identical to them. As the only two known Pharisees in rabbinic literature, such omissions could undermine the connection between the Pharisees and the rabbis.

Neusner takes it for granted that Hillel and Shammai were Pharisees and he uses the copious rabbinic material about them to create his version of Pharisaism.⁴⁴ Skepticism has surrounded this assumption in recent years.⁴⁵ Not only does rabbinic literature fail to designate Hillel and Shammai as Pharisees, the only rabbinic text which might be used to associate them with the Pharisaic Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I, *m. Abot* 1:1-2:8, fails to make an explicit connection. The passage records the passing of traditions from Simeon the Just to Hillel and Shammai, claiming that each man "received" (קבל) the tradition from the previous master(s) (1:2-15), but it omits this formulaic transfer when it introduces Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel (1:16-18), only to reemploy it when the traditions are passed from Hillel to Johanan b.

⁴¹ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:387; and Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 150.

⁴² Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:380, 386-387.

⁴³ Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:375, 386-387.

⁴⁴ E.g. Neusner, *Politics to Piety*, 82-90.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Stemmerger, 39, 39 n. 43; Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 143; and Meier, "Quest," 713-

Zakkai (2:8).⁴⁶ Furthermore, *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan* 14 (ca. 500 C.E.) contains a similar record where Hillel passes the traditions to Johanan b. Zakkai without reference to Gamaliel I or Simeon b. Gamaliel I.⁴⁷ Three other pericopae (*m. Hag.* 2:2; *y. Šabb.* 1:4; *b. Šabb.* 14b) record decrees from several of the men named in *m. Abot*, in roughly the same order as they appear in *m. Abot*, ending with Hillel and Shammai, but without reference to Gamaliel I, Simeon b. Gamaliel I, or Johanan b. Zakkai.⁴⁸ These facts have led several scholars to suspect that Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I were late interpolations to the *m. Abot* chain of traditions.⁴⁹ This, of course, does not mean that Hillel and Shammai were not actually Pharisees, but their affiliation with the group is not clear at this time.⁵⁰ This leaves the current study on individual Pharisees where it began, with Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I and the opaque traditions that the rabbis supplied about them.

In summary, rabbinic literature never calls any individual a Pharisee and there are only two individuals who receive the designation outside rabbinic literature who appear in it as well. Traditions about Gamaliel I and ritual purity are sparse and it cannot be confirmed that it is a uniquely Pharisaic concern through these texts. No such traditions exist for Simeon b. Gamaliel. Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I are remembered, primarily, as influential men, even being lumped in with the great sages of *m. Abot*. It cannot be determined if the traditions about these men have been preserved simply because they were considered wise and influential men, simply

⁴⁶ See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:17-23; Saldarini, "The End of the Rabbinic Chain of Tradition," *JBL* 93 (1974): 102; and Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 143.

⁴⁷ See Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 143; see also Saldarini, "Chain of Tradition," 97-106 for a comparative analysis of *m. Abot*, and two versions of *Abot de Rabbi Nathan*.

⁴⁸ See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:19-21, esp. 19-20 for the chart that compares the passages.

⁴⁹ See Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:21; and Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 143. Even though *m. Abot* is usually attached to the Mishnah, Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 8, suggests that it was actually completed a generation later (ca. 250 C.E.).

⁵⁰ Sievers, "Who Were the Pharisees?" 139, notes that the earliest explicit literary link between the Pharisees and the houses of Hillel and Shammai comes from the commentary Jerome wrote on Isaiah 8:14 (ca. 410 C.E.).

because stories about them were available, simply because Gamaliel II and Simeon II descended from them and were prominent rabbis, simply because they were famous Pharisees, or some combination of the foregoing.

C. The פרושין and the Pharisees

The word פרושין (or פרושים; often seen transliterated as “*perushim*” or “*perushin*”) has often been associated with the Pharisees. As Rivkin points out, however, not every occurrence of פרושין in rabbinic literature offers reliable information about the group known as “the Pharisees.”⁵¹ Its root, פרש, can refer to the act of “separating,” and פרושין could be understood as those (any) people who have somehow separated themselves.⁵² Accordingly, the word פרושין could be used to refer to everything from “heretics” to “holy ones” to “abstinent ones” and more.⁵³

To help delineate between those usages of פרושין which might refer to the Pharisees and those which do not, Rivkin makes three categories for its occurrences: (1) unambiguous references, made up of texts where פרושין is placed in juxtaposition to צדוקין (Sadducees; also צדוקים; צדוקי) or an equivalent (e.g. Rivkin sees “Boethusians” in the Tosefta as a synonym for “Sadducees”); (2) control references, made up of texts upon which scholars had usually agreed that פרושין did not refer to the Pharisees (usually because its usage was negative and the scholars had already assumed that the Pharisees were the rabbis); (3) ambiguous references, made up of texts in which פרושין does not appear with צדוקין but are usually understood as references to the Pharisees.⁵⁴ When evaluating unambiguous texts, however, Rivkin does not keep his study only

⁵¹ See Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 205-208, 234-248; cf. Bowker, 4-5.

⁵² Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 236-238; Bowker, 6-8, 14; and Stemberger, 40; cf. Herford, *The Pharisees*, 33 n. 1.

⁵³ E.g., see Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 236-237.

⁵⁴ See Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 208, 210.

to the word פרושין. He finds, among his firmly Pharisaic texts, two places where the word חכמים (sages) was used in place of פרושין (*b. Yoma* 19b [vs. *t. Yoma* 1:8 // *y. Yoma* 1:5]; and *b. Nid.* 33b).⁵⁵ Through a chain of further connections he is able to conclude that the חכמים, the סופרים (scribes), and a few named rabbinic individuals were all Pharisees, and, furthermore, that the anonymous halaka of the rabbis was Pharisaic teaching.⁵⁶ This ultimately permits Rivkin to assert that the rabbis and the Pharisees were one and the same.⁵⁷ He suggests that the Pharisees/sages/rabbis usually used the term פרושין in a neutral or negative fashion but also in a positive fashion for themselves when in debate with the Sadducees, who were already in the habit of calling the rabbis/sages “פרושין” (i.e. heretics).⁵⁸ As a result, Rivkin could securely keep all negative usages of פרושין in the control text category and also reject the subsequent references appearing in the ambiguous text category.

Rivkin’s connections, however, between the Pharisees and the חכמים, much less other aspects of rabbinic literature, are not secure.⁵⁹ Both of the texts that Rivkin uses to equate the פרושין and the חכמים (*b. Yoma* 19b; *b. Nid.* 33b) are late, and may only reflect the later rabbis’ tendency to draw connections between the Pharisees and the sages.⁶⁰ The Pharisees only appear in the Babylonian versions of both traditions. *B. Niddah* 33b has a Sadducee’s wife assure a worried high priest that all the Sadducean women, except one who died, observe the menstrual purification protocol of the sages (חכמים) because they fear the Pharisees (פרושים). The words חכמים and פרושין represent synonyms in this text, but its parallel and predecessor, *t. Niddah* 5:2-3 (cf. *m. Nid.* 4:2), does not mention the Pharisees. The *b. Niddah*’s addition of the פרושין is

⁵⁵ Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 214-215.

⁵⁶ Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 215, 217, 222, 228, 231, 234, 246-249.

⁵⁷ Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 246-249.

⁵⁸ Rivkin, “Defining the Pharisees,” 237-238, 246, 248.

⁵⁹ E.g. see Stemberger, 40 n. 5; Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 230-231; and Bowker, 29-39.

⁶⁰ See Stemberger, 146-147; Cohen, “Significance of Yavneh,” 39-40, 51-53; and A. J. Avery-Peck, *The Mishnaic Division of Agriculture: A History and Theology of Seder Seraim* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985) 361.

suspect, making information from this passage unreliable.⁶¹ It also appears that the later rabbis added the Pharisees to *b. Yoma* 19b.⁶² *M. Yoma* 1:5 introduces a tradition in which a high priest is given instruction about performing the rites on the Day of Atonement and then made to swear that he would not deviate from it in any way. *T. Yoma* 1:8 explains the seriousness of *m. Yoma* 1:5 with a story. The story claims that a high priest once lit his incense outside the holy of holies before entering. This was against the instruction of the sages (חכמים) who believed that the incense must be lit inside the holy of holies. According to the story, the high priest died within three days. *Y. Yoma* 1:5 quotes *t. Yoma* almost verbatim. Up to this point, the פרושין have not been mentioned. It is only the teaching of the חכמים which the high priest failed to observe. *B. Yoma* 19b introduces the Pharisees into the text without precedent, giving them the revered status of the sages. *B. Yoma* 19b was particularly important to Rivkin's reconstruction of the Pharisees because it gives the Pharisees authority over the high priest and religious rites in the temple.⁶³ The late inclusion of the Pharisees, however, makes it unreliable as a source for information on the pre-70 Pharisees.⁶⁴ While *b. Niddah* 33b and *b. Yoma* 19b suggest that the amoraic rabbis saw continuity between the sages and the Pharisees, it cannot conclusively establish that the tannaitic rabbis also viewed such a connection.

Unfortunately, there is still no firm conclusion on which occurrences of פרושין refer to the Pharisees, and which do not. Rivkin's control and ambiguous texts cannot be clearly defined as references to the Pharisees, nor can several of them be entirely disregarded. While it may not

⁶¹ See Cohen, "Significance of Yavneh," 36-40, 51-53; Lightstone, 214; and Stemmerger, 140-147.

⁶² J. Lightstone, "Sadducees Versus Pharisees: The Tannaitic Sources," in *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, vol. 3, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 212-213; and Stemmerger, 57-59.

⁶³ Rivkin, *Hidden Revolution*, 137, 176.

⁶⁴ Lightstone, 215.

utilize all the information available, this study is limited to the seven remaining traditions Rivkin introduced among his “unambiguous texts.”⁶⁵

Several of the pericopae have aspects of ritual purity as their subject. *M. Yadayim* 4:6 suggests that the Pharisees believed that handling the Scriptures caused the ritual impurity of one’s hands, but that other works did not.⁶⁶ Johanan b. Zakkai enters the debate in what appears to be a rhetorical challenge to a Pharisaic belief that the bones of a donkey are clean but the bones of the high priest are unclean. He thereby gives the Pharisees the opportunity to defend their stance on Scripture by arguing that their love for cherished objects makes them unclean to handle (cf. *t. Yad.* 2:19). The pericope favors the Pharisees’ position over the Sadducees’, but this does not prove that the rabbis were Pharisees, nor that the envisioned impurity to the hands by handling Scripture was a uniquely Pharisaic position.

Again on the subject of purity, *m. Yadayim* 4:7a suggests that the Pharisees did not think that the continuous flow of water (נצוק) from a clean container into an impure one would cause impurity in the upper one, but that they doubted the purity of a stream which flowed through a burial ground. The Sadducees in this pericope complain about the Pharisees’ laxity on the issue of the נצוק, and the Pharisees complain against the Sadducees’ laxity on the stream. As a result, it appears as though the Sadducees were also concerned with ritual purity, at least in some contexts, and in some issues more stringently than the Pharisees.⁶⁷ Neusner suggests that the

⁶⁵ These include: (1) a debate with the Sadducees over the purity of one’s hands after touching Scripture (*m. Yad.* 4:6); (2) a debate with the Sadducees over the ritual purity of flowing water (*m. Yad.* 4:7a); (3) a debate with the Sadducees over the culpability of the master of a slave who has damaged a neighbor’s goods (*m. Yad.* 4:7b); (4) a debate with a Galilean Sadducee (צדוקי) or heretic (מיין) over usage of the ruler’s name on a bill of divorce (*m. Yad.* 4:8); (5) the Sadducees ridicule the Pharisees for purifying a lamp (*t. Hag.* 3:35 // *y. Hag.* 79:1); (6) a debate with the Boethusians over the inheritance rights of a daughter (*t. Yad.* 2:20a); and (7) a complaint by the “dawn immersionists” because the Pharisees speak the name of God without purifying their bodies first (*t. Yad.* 2:20b).

⁶⁶ For the “other works,” variant texts read “מירם,” “מירס,” and “המירם”; these have been explained as the books of the heretics or Homer; see H. Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (London, et al.: Oxford University Press, 1933), 784, n. 7.

⁶⁷ Cf. Finkelstein, “The Pharisees: Their Origin and their Philosophy,” *HTR* 22 (1929): 212, and n. 66.

Pharisees were primarily a quietist movement concerned with purity in their own home, but the Sadducees' interest in their practices of purity, and vice-versa, might suggest that the Pharisees were somewhat public about their beliefs, or even advocated them outside their own ranks. If Neusner's reconstruction were accepted, it might be necessary to understand *m. Yadayim* 4:7a as a post-70 debate, which is also possible.

In *t. Hag.* 3:35 // *y. Hag.* 79:1, the Sadducees laugh at some Pharisees who are purifying the menorah after a festival. That these Pharisees were handling the menorah suggests that they were priests.⁶⁸ The dispute is either over whether or not the menorah needs to be purified, or whether it needs to be purified in this particular instance. The tradition suggests that the Pharisees and Sadducees possessed different viewpoints, but it does not expand upon their positions. *T. Hag.* 3:8 makes it appear that the rabbis envisioned the possibility that all the utensils in the temple, except the altars, could contract ritual impurity.⁶⁹ This seems to align the rabbis with the Pharisees against the Sadducees, but, again, it does not prove a connection between the two.⁷⁰

The redactor of the Tosefta apparently connected *Yadayim* 2:20b to 2:20a because he thought the פרושים in 2:20b represented the same Pharisees as 2:20a. *T. Yadayim* 2:20b offers very little information about the Pharisees and their views on purity. It is the beliefs of the “dawn immersionists” (טיבלני שחרית) which are revealed through their complaint that the Pharisees fail to wash their bodies before saying the name of God. The Pharisees complain that the dawn immersionists say the name of God at all. This may be a sarcastic response aimed at ridiculing the immersionists' view of the body. This pericope makes it appear as though other groups existed which held more stringent views on some aspects of purity than the Pharisees.

⁶⁸ Lightstone, 208.

⁶⁹ Lightstone, 207.

⁷⁰ See also Stemberger, 51, 62.

The three remaining traditions suggest that the Pharisees had interests in civil affairs beyond those associated with ritual purity. According to *m. Yadayim* 4:7b, the Pharisees believed that an owner was culpable for the damages done by an animal, but not culpable for the misconduct of slaves.⁷¹ *M. Yadayim* 4:8 proposes that the Pharisees were concerned with how the name of God, Moses, and the human ruler were used on a bill of divorce. *T. Yadayim* 2:20a has the Pharisees argue over the inheritance rights of a daughter versus those of a granddaughter through a deceased son.⁷² These more civically minded pericopae, which make up three out of the seven usable פרושין texts, suggest that the Pharisees were concerned with more than ritual purity around their own table. At least it may be said that the rabbis remembered them as having more interests. Furthermore, each of these three pericopae involves the Pharisees in a debate with a second party, suggesting that they were, or the rabbi(s) thought they were, interested in the practices of others around them.

In summary, according to the seven usable פרושין texts, the rabbis favored several of the Pharisees' positions.⁷³ This does not necessarily mean that the rabbis were Pharisees. These traditions may only represent a small percentage of Pharisaic information that the early rabbis had at their disposal and the only information the rabbis thought worthy of preservation; or the rabbis may have projected their own positions into the traditions about the Pharisees.⁷⁴ The rabbis' selection of traditions about the Pharisees suggests that they were concerned with ritual purity and some other civic practices such as divorce, inheritance, and property damages.

⁷¹ Finkelstein, "The Pharisees: Their Origin and Their Philosophy," 219-222, reasons that the Pharisees, as advocates of the lower social classes, were more interested in the human rights of the slaves than culpability of a master in such cases, but it could also be argued that the Pharisees had the interests of the slave owners in mind. The latter option seems more straightforward and perhaps more probable, but other issues may be involved in this debate which are not obvious to the modern reader.

⁷² Cf. *b. B. Bat.* 115b where Johanan b. Zakkai replaces the Pharisees of *t. Yad.* 2:20a; cf. also Lightstone, 211.

⁷³ Cf. Lightstone, 216; and Stemberger, 48, 52.

⁷⁴ See Lightstone, 216.

D. Conclusion to the Rabbis' View of the Pharisees

The uncertainty about the connection between the Pharisees and the rabbis makes it difficult to cull information about the Pharisees from rabbinic literature. Even the most reliable Pharisaic traditions offer very little about the first-century Pharisees, and perhaps less about the pre-70 Pharisees. Only two individuals in rabbinic literature can be identified as Pharisees with any level of certainty: Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I. The rabbis suggest that both men were influential and powerful, but it cannot be determined how far that influence really reached. Nor is it known if their prestige should be attributed to their Pharisaic links or to something else. Few halakic opinions survive under Gamaliel's name and none do under Simeon's. It is possible that the rabbis suppressed their teachings, either because they were associated with a losing branch of Pharisaism or because the Pharisees lost or changed in general. If materials about them were suppressed, it might argue for more discontinuity than continuity between the Pharisees and later rabbis. Nonetheless, the rabbis remembered these two famous Pharisees, and saw fit to incorporate (somewhat sterilized?) traditions about them into their records.

The word פרושין does not always refer to the Pharisees, and even when it does it does not offer much information. Only seven פרושין passages can be securely attached to the Pharisees. Four traditions about the Pharisees suggest that they were concerned about ritual purity, as were the rabbis. Thus, it appears that the rabbis found these traditions about the Pharisees to be advantageous to their own program. These passages, however, cannot prove that ritual purity was a uniquely Pharisaic preoccupation, or that the rabbis were Pharisees. The three remaining פרושין passages have the Pharisees debating over civic issues besides ritual purity, suggesting that their concerns extended beyond ritual purity, as do some of the pericopae about Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I.

The rabbinic picture of the Pharisees suggests that the Pharisees were interested in the practices of the Jewish society, but, outside the social stature of Gamaliel I and Simeon b. Gamaliel I, it does not reveal how much the group involved itself in social matters. The surviving traditions give no indication that the Pharisees were especially successful at promoting a program for piety. The rabbis' agreement with the Pharisees on a few issues may speak either to their success, their relationship to the rabbis, or the mainstream nature of those issues discussed. In short, the rabbis left posterity a very fuzzy picture of Pharisaism in Jewish society.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: SKETCHING THE PHARISEES

Now that the source material has been examined, an attempt at reconciling these pictures of the Pharisees may be made. At the same time, the scholarly reconstructions of chapter two may be critiqued. Unfortunately, this study has not rediscovered the Pharisees from the first century. The last three chapters have only offered up the most meager amounts of data. That data is nuanced with the intentions of the authors, their own limited understanding, the limitations of the words they used, and the limitations of the modern person to absorb their meaning. Nonetheless, the task continues as long as the question does. The answer offered here is: *the Pharisees were a recognizable group who held doctrines and practices that aligned them well with the majority of pious Jews most of the time; they were a group whose piety was generally deemed outstanding; and these qualities probably offered individual Pharisees some celebrity influence.* This is an extremely vague answer, as it should be given the evidence. What this means and does not mean will be worked out in more detail during the course of this final chapter.

All three bodies of literature seem to present the Pharisees as a group that was somewhat popular and mainstream, or at least they can be interpreted that way. The relationship Josephus sees between the popularity of the Pharisees and their political influence is most interesting. Their influence in Josephus' works does not come from their relationship to the authorities, but rather from their relationship with the people (*Ant.* 18.11-15, 17). This image, of course, may be partly due to Josephus' perspective. Josephus comes from the governing class, and his concerns

are more the concerns of the aristocrats than the peasants. The Pharisees normally enter his works when they have produced trouble in the arena of government. He rationalizes their ability to cause problems by placing the people on their side. It appears that the Pharisees' chief currency among the people is their image of appropriate piety. Somehow the majority of people seem to think that the Pharisees observe the laws and traditions correctly. Their views are in line with the opinions of the majority, and their level of participation in the religious life is considered excellent. Thus they appear to have a celebrity quality among the people. Josephus, however, seems disenchanted with them, and rarely gives them favorable publicity. He often pictures them as political meddlers who are popular but reckless.

The New Testament also affords them some level of popularity. Paul envisions that his audience, or perhaps his opponents, will see his connection with the Pharisees as a positive one (Phil. 3:5). Mark makes them an influential part of the mainstream in Galilee (2:16-3:6; 7:1-5). It may be inferred from Matthew's gospel that the Pharisees were a popular standard for religious excellence (5:20; 23:1-3), one which Matthew's Jesus aims to topple. Luke places them among the wealthy and well-to-do in his gospel, but, in Acts, his Paul mentions their reputation for piety (26:5), which could carry an allusion to their popularity. John's gospel folds the lower level religious leaders/movements into one and uses the term "Pharisee" as a generic description for them all. This choice of the word "Pharisee" over another description may suggest some level of popularity, though the choice could have also been determined by theological battles between Christians and Pharisees. Like Josephus, Paul, Matthew, and Luke all seem to agree that they possess a positive reputation for keeping, or exceeding, the norms of piety. For Paul (and Luke's Paul) this is a bargaining chip to find favor with his opponents. For the gospels, it is an obstacle that threatens to crush Jesus' message or draw away his crowds.

Such popularity is not explicitly mentioned in rabbinic literature, but the texts available for examination suggest that the rabbis sided with them on several issues. This might be evidence for continuity between the Pharisees and the rabbis, but it may also simply demonstrate how mainstream the Pharisees' views were. Several of their opinions may have been in line with other branches of Judaism and/or the masses in general. Rabbinic literature, at least the amount of it available for study here, does not favor the view that the Pharisees were totally unique in their observation of ritual purity (e.g. *t. Yad.* 2:20b). It cannot yet be determined what, if anything, among the purity practices made a Pharisee a Pharisee. Rabbinic literature simply places them among those, perhaps multiple groups, who practiced extra-biblical purity rites (cf. Mark 7:1-5). Perhaps this and some of their other practices gave them a level of acceptance among the masses and the rabbis.

Thus far, the developing picture of Pharisaism is not that far off from that of Sanders or Deines who both put the Pharisees into a mainstream category called "Common Judaism." Already, however, this vague reconstruction probably offers a little too much popularity to the pre-70's Pharisees for Sanders, who wishes to assure their limited power. This, however, is not meant as an endorsement of Deines' view, which makes the Pharisees the driving force in "Common Judaism." Deines' reconstruction races beyond the evidence currently available. Even more doubtful is the notion that the Pharisees controlled religious thought in Judea as Rivkin asserts.

One finds little evidence that the Pharisees controlled or drove religious life in Palestine during any era, whether the Hasmonean, Herodian, gospel, or post-70. At best, they appear to be vanguards of Jewish society, its popular religious practices, and its common beliefs (e.g. *War* 2.162; *Ant.* 13.293-298; Mark 2:16-3:6; and perhaps *m. Yad.* 4:7; *t. Hag.* 3:35, along any other

rabbinic text which seems to give the Pharisees a favored argument). How Jewish society reached those beliefs and practices that the Pharisees seem to guard is unknown. Such practices and beliefs may or may not have originated with the Pharisees, and Jewish society may or may not have been obeying the Pharisees when they observed them. The Pharisees may have promoted certain beliefs and practices, but it cannot yet be determined whether the Pharisees invented new ones or rationalized and protected already popular ones. Even if several Jewish practices originated with the Pharisees, as those practices became engrained in society they would not necessarily be regarded as Pharisaic by the average Jewish person. Such a person might not feel an obligation to adhere to everything else a Pharisee promoted. Possessing a significant amount of theological agreement with the majority may have given them a certain level of prestige among the masses, but concluding that the masses obeyed everything the Pharisees said, or that the Pharisees had sole power for inclusion or exclusion in the religious community, is beyond the evidence at this point.

Sanders' view of the Pharisees' relationship to the priesthood (i.e. that the Pharisees had no control over the temple establishment) is probably much safer than Rivkin's (i.e. that the Pharisees had usurped the priests' religious influence), and probably more correct. There is also no reliable evidence to suggest that the Pharisees molested the priesthood or the functions of temple. It is quite possible that, if the Pharisees carried the voice of the majority, various intricacies were affected by their lobbying, if they lobbied. The presence of influential individuals like Gamaliel I in the Sanhedrin suggests that they may have had some advisory input into the administration of the temple. Even so, this evidence is considerably short of proving that the priests were frightened by the Pharisees or that the Pharisees were in control of the religious establishment. The Pharisees' failure to control the Sanhedrin in Acts 23:7-10 and

their absence in the gospels' passion narratives argue against attributing too much power to the Pharisees. It is only very late in rabbinic literature that the priesthood is made to revere the Pharisaic interpretations (*b. Yoma* 19b). It is quite possible that the Pharisees' voice *helped* shape mainstream Judaism, perhaps even to *some degree* in the temple and its practices, but, given the evidence, it would be an overstatement to say that the Pharisees were in control of the priesthood or the temple.

Neusner's reconstruction suffers from shortcomings as well. The evidence does not support well the notion that the Pharisees became an apolitical entity centered on private table-fellowship and private tithing after Herod. While several texts (e.g. *Ant.* 13:297-298; Mark 2:16-3:2; 7:1-5, 7; *m. Yad.* 4:6-7a; *t. Hag.* 3:35) suggest that the Pharisees had a special interest in issues such as ritual purity, table-fellowship, tithing, the Sabbath, and the traditions of the fathers, too little evidence exists to suggest that these were their only concerns or that these concerns were uniquely Pharisaic. The post-70 rabbis appear to believe that the Sadducees (*m. Yad.* 4:6-7a) and the "dawn immersionists" (*t. Yad.* 2:20b) were also concerned with ritual purity, sometimes more stringently than the Pharisees. The rabbis also believed that the Pharisees were concerned with details that were more civic in nature (*m. Yad.* 4:7b-8; *t. Yad.* 2:20a). Josephus, a first-century C.E. author, sees no problem with attributing political ambition to them during the Hasmonean dynasty (e.g. *War* 1.10-114). He twice places them in the politically charged scene on the eve of the Jewish revolt (*War* 2.411; *Life* 21); he calls them the foremost Jewish school of thought (*War* 2.162); he seems somewhat dismayed by their (current) popularity; and he claims that several of them were actively campaigning against him during his command of Galilee (*Life* 189-198ff). Mark's gospel, written within a few years of the Jewish revolt, already places the Pharisees at the center of a wrestling match with Jesus over the norms of Jewish society in

Galilee (e.g. Mark 2:16-3:6). Such activity could be attributed to a few individuals who were not representative of the whole group, but in fact there is no obvious reason to suggest that these Pharisees were making a break with typical Pharisaic behavior. To make his case, Neusner appeals to the traditions about the houses of Hillel and Shammai, with their preoccupation with table-fellowship and tithing, and the absence of many civic pericopae pertaining to them. As the evidence currently stands, however, the association between Hillel, Shammai, and the Pharisaic community has yet to be established. Even if it is accepted that Hillel and Shammai were Pharisees, there is no guarantee that the rabbinic traditions about them represent the full gamut of their theological interests or their political ones. More likely it was the post-70 rabbis' interests that determined the subject matter of the traditions about these men, or at least determined which traditions were preserved. The Pharisees' political and sociological ambitions during the first half of the first century remain heavily shrouded, but there is not enough evidence to conclude that there was a significant change between Herod and the Jewish revolt.

In spite of several of the scholarly reconstructions, there is also not enough evidence to conclude that the post-70 rabbis were the theological progeny of the pre-70 Pharisees. Again, the earliest rabbis never make such a connection. Connections between the Pharisees and the rabbinic sages were a late innovation, and, in the absence of this or other equivalent nomenclature, the rabbis seem to give very little explicit attention to the Pharisees. The New Testament's increasing preoccupation with the Pharisees could have resulted from specific theological discussions which were remembered by the evangelists or alive during later years without any need to conclude that the Pharisees had gained theological or political control of post-70 Palestine. Despite the claims of Smith and Neusner, the later works of Josephus do not appear to be propaganda pieces to promote the Pharisees to Rome. Josephus' treatment of the

Pharisees is buried too deeply in his narrative to be an obvious appeal and, moreover, his generally negative appraisal of the Pharisees and their activities would have been counterproductive. Furthermore, *Antiquities*' more thorough treatment of the group's history is better explained by the fact that *Antiquities* is generally more detailed than *War*. Undoubtedly, the Pharisees were part of the post-70 sociological environment. They may have made significant contributions to the development of rabbinic Judaism. It is doubtful, however, that they were the sole framers of the post-revolt era. One might even validly ask whether they were the primary contributors. Even if Pharisees were a significant part of the post-70 reconstruction efforts, it is not known how their basic tenets were affected by the temple's destruction.

Much of the evidence seems to support Saldarini's conclusion that the majority of them fell somewhere within the retainer/broker class of society. Yet they also had, as Saldarini acknowledges, representation in the upper echelons of society (e.g. *Life* 191; Acts 5:34), and evidence related to the apostle Paul could suggest that some Pharisees lived among the lower classes (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 9:6). Pharisees serving in retainer positions (judges, synagogue leaders, personal representatives, etc.) could have held a significant amount of influence, but they would have also depended on their relationship to their patron for authority. Those same patrons, however, would have also depended on their retainer for the services they supplied, including the honor the retainer brought to them in the community.¹ If a significant number of Pharisees held retainer positions, it is possible that they used their own popularity among the masses to promote their patrons and guarantee their continued employment. Looking at it from the other side, the Pharisees' good reputation as a group may have prompted government officials and aristocrats to seek out and enlist Pharisees so that they could share in the Pharisees'

¹ See Hanson and Oakman, 73, 79-80; for the role of honor and shame in ancient Mediterranean cultures, see Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees*, 54-56, 56-59.

positive image. It is quite possible, as Saldarini suggests, that the Pharisees used such relationships to promote their theological agenda when and where the opportunity arose. Exactly what their theological agenda was, however, is almost entirely unknown.

Whatever their specific theological agenda might have been, it apparently clashed with the theological agenda of Jesus and his followers on certain issues, even while it agreed on other significant issues like resurrection. Understanding that the Pharisees were a somewhat popular part of the recognized Jewish mainstream, that their piety was generally considered praiseworthy, and that a number of them were deemed significant members of society should help New Testament interpreters understand why Jesus and his followers might have considered them so dangerous to their movement. Conversely, it might also help explain why some Pharisees might have felt threatened by Jesus' popularity and the innovations of Christianity. With competing hopes for society and piety, both may have felt threatened by the other. This conflict, however, does not necessarily establish that the Pharisees controlled the religion of Palestine. New Testament evidence certainly suggests that Jesus and his later followers felt pressure from the Pharisaic ranks; but whether this is more indicative of the Pharisees' influence, some perceived novelty within Jesus' movement, or something else cannot be determined. Thus, New Testament interpreters should exercise some caution when reconstructing the life and times of Jesus and the early church in relation to the Pharisees.

The conclusion drawn about the Pharisees in this work, that they were a distinguishable entity within mainstream Judaism with a reputation for excellent piety which probably induced some celebrity influence, only gives a glimpse at their role and status in Palestinian society. It is less than a portrait or a detailed illustration. It is more like a sketching of a stick figure. The unfortunate thing about this conclusion is that, while it seems to fit the evidence, it is not specific

enough to satisfy the historical curiosity that surrounds the Pharisees. This conclusion could function as a foundation that would support multiple reconstructions, and even some of the scholarly reconstructions featured in this work. One easily outruns the available evidence, however, if one tries to build up a more thorough interpretation. Before much more could be said about the Pharisees, it is necessary for new evidence to surface or for a new method of examination to be developed. Until then, perhaps it is best to nurture an underdeveloped sketch of the Pharisees and their elusive place in first-century Palestinian society.

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