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## JUDAISM AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

THE evil that men write, as well as the evil that men do, often lives after them. Calumnies against the Jews seem to have a peculiarly charmed life: in classical times Manetho, an Egyptian historian of the third century B. C. E., represented that they were in origin a pack of Egyptian lepers who were expelled from his country because of their foul disease. The story was refuted over and over again; yet Tacitus writing in the second century C. E. solemnly repeats it with a little decoration. In parts of the New Testament, again, the Pharisees are represented by their enemies as a class of self-righteous hypocrites. Historical criticism has proved that the charges come from embittered controversialists; yet writer after writer repeats them as though they were certain truths, and pays no account to their refutation and the fuller knowledge which is now available.

The latest repetition of the story occurs in "The Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire", by Mr. Glover, a classical lecturer of St. John's College, Cambridge, whose book has attracted a considerable amount of attention in England. It is one of the 'Life and Time Histories' as they have been called; but it differs from many of the class in that the author is not a pure theologian, but has a large knowledge of the Greek and Roman literature of the first three centuries of the Christian era. It does not claim to be a work of erudite scholarship, but a popular representation of the religious conditions in which Christianity grew up, based on a series of lectures which were given at a Theological College. It may be considered then to embody the current conception of Judaism which is disseminated among theological students, and it is therefore worth while to dissect its statements in some detail; for the involuntary anti-Judaism of scholars is as dangerous as the deliberate anti-Semitism of politicians. Mr. Glover has endeavored, as he puts it in his preface, "to see the founder of the Christian

movement and some of his followers as they appeared among their contemporaries, to represent Christian and Pagan with equal goodwill and equal honesty and in my perspective to recapture something of the colour and movement of life, using imagination to interpret the data, and controlling it by them."

It is perhaps accidental that Mr. Glover omits the Jews among those he intends "to represent with equal goodwill and equal honesty;" but it cannot be accidental that in his list of authorities there is not a single book by a Jew, nor a single standard work written from the Jewish point of view. Paul is after all not the only reliable authority for the Judaism of the period. The Talmud is doubtless a difficult book for the Gentile to study, and the elaborate works upon it by German scholars may not be attractive: Mr. Glover might, however, with less difficulty have consulted the writings of two members of his own University, the Edition of the Sayings of the Fathers by the late Master of St. John's College, and Professor Schechter's articles upon Jewish Theology; and had he done so, he must have regarded the Jews with a little more truth and a better perspective. As it is we have a rehash of the old denunciations of Pharisaism and its mechanical soulless conception of religion, which poses for an account of Judaism at the time. It is surely a little grotesque that an author who has made a close study of the Stoics, Plutarch, Justin, Celsus, Apuleius, in fact of every pagan scribbler who has survived from that epoch, in order to get a true setting for early Christianity, should know nothing of contemporary Judaism at first hand; and so long as theologians and theological historians are unable or unwilling to go to the Rabbis themselves, and accept the Pauline epistles and Schürer's history equally as gospel truth, so long will they give an account of the Jews which is not history but '*Tendenz-writing*'.

Having given an illuminating survey of Roman religion, the Stoic religious philosophy, and Plutarch's religious eclecticism, Mr. Glover in his fourth chapter comes to the central figure of his book, Jesus of Nazareth, and treats him in the manner of Renan: i. e. he puts aside what is miraculous in the Gospel narrative, accepts the rest as true, and heightens its effect with some local color and rhetorical writing. With this we have no special cavil, though it may be remarked that the rejection of the miraculous elements in

the life of Jesus makes it more unreasonable to regard him as absolutely unique among his contemporaries. All experience teaches us that the great men of any age reflect in their highest development the ideas of that age; and it is, therefore, unscientific of Mr. Glover to assume that the humanity and spirituality of Jesus are in contrast with the attitude of the Rabbis.

But what we are specially concerned with is not Mr. Glover's account of Jesus but his attitude to contemporary Judaism, and in order to appreciate his outlook and method it is necessary to quote a somewhat long passage. He is dealing with the teaching of Jesus upon man's relation to God. "Jews and Greeks," he says, at this period "talked of righteousness and holiness—'holy' is one of the great words of the period—and they sought these things in ritual and abstinence. Modern Jews resent the suggestion that the thousand and one regulations as to ceremonial purity, and the casuistries, as many or more, spun out of the law and the traditions, ranked with the great commandments of neighbourly love and the worship of the One God. No doubt they are right, but it is noticeable that in practice the common type of mind is more impressed with minutiae than with principles. The Southern European to-day will do murder on little provocation, but to eat meat in Lent is sin. But, without attributing such conspicuous sins as theft and adultery and murder to the Pharisees, it is clear that, in establishing their own righteousness, they laid excessive stress on the details of the law, on Sabbath-keeping (a constant topic with the Christian Apologists), on tithes, and temple ritual, on the washing of pots and plates—still rigorously maintained by the modern Jews—and all this was supposed to constitute holiness. Jesus with the clear incisive word of genius dismissed it all as "acting". The Pharisee was essentially an actor—playing to himself the most contemptible little comedies of holiness. Listen, cries Jesus, and he tells the tale of the man fallen among thieves and left for dead, and how priest and Levite passed by on the other side, fearing the pollution of a corpse, and how they left mercy, God's own work—'I will have mercy and not sacrifice' was one of his quotations from Hosea,—to be done by one unclean and damned—the Samaritan. Whited sepulchres! he cries, pretty to look at, but full of what? Of death, corruption and foulness.

'How *can* you escape from the judgment of hell?' he asked them, and no one records what they answered or could answer. It is clear, however, that outside Palestine, the Jews in the great world were moving to a more purely moral conception of religion—their environment made mere Pharisaism impossible, and Greek criticism compelled them to think more or less in the terms of the fundamental. The debt of the Jew to the Gentile is not very generously acknowledged. None the less, the distinctive badge of all his tribe was and remained what the Greeks called τὸ ψοφοδέες. The Sabbath, circumcision, the blood and butter taboos remained,—as they still remain in the most liberal of "Liberal Judaism's"—tribe marks with no religious value, but maintained by patriotism. And side by side with this lived and lives that hatred of the Gentile which is attributed to Christian persecution, but which Juvenal saw and noted before the Christian had ceased to be persecuted by the Jew. The extravagant nonsense found in Jewish speculation as to how many Gentile souls were equivalent in God's sight to that of one Jew is symptomatic. To this day it is confessedly the weakness of Judaism that it offers no impulse and knows no enthusiasm for self-sacrificing love where the interests of the tribe are not concerned."

In passing we may commiserate with the Liberal Jews who, despite all their efforts and proclamations, are still accused of maintaining the Sabbath and the blood and butter taboos, and that too from motives of Jewish patriotism, and of hating the Gentile from motives of tribal loyalty. But more seriously the whole passage betrays no less ignorance than prejudice. It is what Mr. Glover would call "symptomatic" that he treats the story of the Good Samaritan as an example of Pharisaic narrowness, though the Priest and Levite who passed on the other side of the road would more probably have belonged to the Sadducee than the Pharisee sect, and though at least one acute critic has argued that the Samaritan himself was substituted in a later gloss to the text for an 'Israelite'. (See Halévy, *REJ.*, IV, 249.) The 'Israelite' would point the contrast better with the Priest and Levite, and Samaritans did not live in the neighborhood of Jericho. It is true that the New Testament has not recorded the answer of the Pharisees whom Jesus reproached—the Chronicler was careful about that—but we may be allowed

to answer for them that the Pharisees realized as clearly as Jesus that holiness depended upon inward purity, (as a perusal of the Ethics of the Fathers in the Jewish Prayer-book would show), that it was a Pharisee who enunciated before Jesus the golden rule, that it was not play-acting but a lofty theory of morals which led them to lay stress upon daily conduct and to interweave religion with the common concerns of man, and that, as Josephus put it, other peoples made religion a part of virtue, but the Jewish teachers ordained virtue to be a part of religion. (Josephus c. Apionem II, 17.) The most elementary knowledge of the teaching of the most distinguished Jewish sage in the time of Jesus would have convinced Mr. Glover that it is absurd to suppose that the Rabbis ranked the prescripts about tithes and pot and pans—which were not in fact determined for hundreds of years after Jesus—on a level with the great moral principles. Was it not Hillel who said that the whole law was summed up in the maxim: "Do not unto others what thou wouldst not that they should do to thee:—all the rest is commentary thereon", implying that humanity is the object of the law? And was it not Hillel again who said that it was the duty of man "to love his fellow-creatures and bring them near to the Torah," representing the dominant ideal of Judaism which was to spread Jewish teaching over the world? Mr. Glover rather intensifies than mitigates the injustice of his account in a footnote to the passage we have quoted. "Of course every general statement," he adds, "requires modification, but the predominantly tribal character of Judaism implies contempt for the spiritual life of the Gentile Christian and Pagan. If the knowledge of God was or is of value to the Jew, he made little effort to share it." To say the least, it is unkind to bring this reproach against a people who, when Christianity was established as the religion of the Roman Empire, were forbidden under penalty of death to make any converts, and who, when the Church became the dominant power in Europe, were massacred, tortured, and burnt at the stake in thousands for remaining loyal to their religion. The self-sacrificing love, which the Jew so painfully lacks, meant for the Christian Church, so far as history teaches, the love of sacrificing others who would not accept the exact dogmatic teaching which it held at any epoch. But we protest in the name of truth as well as of justice against

the charge that before they were repressed by the ruthless legislation of Christendom, the Jews were tribal and exclusive, or remiss in preaching their faith among the Gentiles. The New Testament itself is here evidence against Mr. Glover, when it speaks of these narrow self-centered Pharisees as scouring earth and sea to make a proselyte, or when it records that Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, had journeyed to Ephesus to preach the word of God to the pagans. Apart from Philo and Josephus who speak over and over again of the missionary activity and success of the Jew in all parts of the world—but who, Mr. Glover may say, are partial historians—the pagan authorities are as explicit, if less exultant, about the rapid spread of Judaism. Mr. Glover might, on this point, have consulted his classical authors, whom he knows so well. “The Jews,” says Strabo, “have penetrated into every state, so that it is difficult to find a single place in the world in which their tribe has not been received and become dominant.” Horace refers to Sabbath-observance as a common habit at Rome, which was practised by the man in the street (*unus multorum*): and Seneca, fierce anti-Semite that he was, writing after Palestine had been placed under a Roman governor, says: “Nevertheless the practices of this accursed race have so far prevailed that they have been received over the whole world: the vanquished have imposed their laws upon the victors.” Indeed the most constant accusation against the Jew is that he will not keep his religion to himself, but insists on propagating it among his neighbors.

But what of the passage in which Juvenal notes the Jewish hatred of the Gentile? Juvenal wrote one hundred years after the time of Jesus, when hundreds of thousands of Jews had been massacred by the Gentiles in the terrible wars of extermination that followed the fall of Jerusalem and the revolt against Trajan. Is it strange that in the year 100 or 120 C. E., Jews should have felt some hatred towards the Romans? Or is it disgraceful that they should have felt some ‘contempt for the spiritual life’ of the pagan with its untranslatable abominations that Juvenal has described? Were not the Christians also charged by pagan writers with ‘odium humani generis?’ And against the fancies of a particular Rabbi, who played with the equation of souls, may not we set, on the one hand, the saying of another Rabbi who explained the verse

of Isaiah: "Open ye the gates that the righteous people may enter in", to mean that one of the Gentiles who fulfils the laws of the Torah is as good as the High-priest himself:—one might add a hundred explanations to the same effect—and, on the other hand, the savagery of one of Mr. Glover's Christian worthies, Tertullian, quoted in this book, who shows his love of the Gentiles in these words: "You are fond of spectacles. Expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult when I behold so many proud monarchs and fancied gods groaning in the lower abyss of darkness, so many magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord liquefying in fierce fires that they once kindled against the Christians, so many sage philosophers blushing in red hot flames with their deluded scholars!" (*De Spectaculis* 30).—"Hath not a Jew hands, organs, senses, affections, passions"? is it that what is tribal narrowness in him becomes righteous indignation in the Christian?

Judaism had the same aspiration as Christianity to be a universal religion, and the Christians learnt from Jews to be missionaries, and were at first nothing more than a heretical Jewish sect, professing to carry out their mission in a special way. Tertullian admits that the early Church grew up "under the shadow of the Jews", but, to apply Mr. Glover's words, the debt of the Christian to the Jew has not been very generously acknowledged. It has been repaid in blood—of the Jew. As Christianity expanded, it departed more and more from the teachings of its founder as well as from Judaism, and its progress pointed to the Rabbis the danger of indiscriminate conversion and compromise with foreign ideas. In those mad centuries, when, together with the Roman Empire, the whole ancient civilization was breaking up and dissolving in the melting-pot of crude superstitions and hybrid creeds, the Rabbis were at pains to preserve the integrity and purity of Judaism by strengthening its outer defences. It was otherwise with the Church at this period. Mr. Glover claims that Jesus had once for all set religion free from the servitude of ritual and taboos; yet between the second and fifth centuries the Church was establishing the worse and harsher servitude of dogmas and beliefs, which for hundreds of years was to be, and which still is in some countries, immeasur-



ably more oppressive upon the mind than ever the Pharisaic development of the law was upon the body or the spirit. The moment Christianity emerged out of the region of spirit and began to establish itself as a world-religion, it was compelled to devise some bond which would hold its members together; and having rejected the law of conduct it chose the law of belief. When it became successful, as Renan admitted, the Church deteriorated; and brought into the world a new and awful tyranny, combining the ecclesiastical bigotry with the temporal powers of the Roman Empire; it established a merciless domination over conscience, and compelled Judaism to become, what it had never desired to be, an exclusive national religion; and had it not been for the stedfastness of the Jew, it would have stamped out his religion altogether. Perhaps the Christian world would not be so hard on the Pharisees, even the Pharisees of its imagination, if it remembered the Church-synods of history.

The story is told of a girl who, when asked if there were any wild beasts in England, replied "No, except in the Theological Gardens." Her language was doubtless too strong, but it is in the theological gardens that the pests of prejudice and misrepresentation live longest. Mr. Glover speaks of the different attitude of the Christian world since the Renaissance to the evidences of Christianity from miracle and prophecy; we may hope that as the historical criticism of the nineteenth century enters into men's minds, the attitude of the Christian world may change to the evidences of Christianity from the narrowness and soullessness of Pharisaic religion, and that writers upon the time of Jesus may deign to correct Paul's controversial account of Judaism by at least a superficial study of the Jewish records of the age.

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