



The Pharisees – An Old Religious Fraternity

Where'd they come from?
What'd they do in Jesus' ministry?
Are they still around today?
How do we deal with their errors?

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THE PHARISEES - AN OLD RELIGIOUS FRATERNITY

Pastors, teachers, and laymen, at any convention need no special introduction to the fraternity we call "The Pharisees". It is one of the oldest religious fraternities in existence, even predating the birth of Christ by many years. So common is the Bible-based stereotype of the Pharisees that only the briefest reference to them is all that is needed to put a modern Pharisee in place. Let a church leader pontificate on his great accomplishments and superlative methods and the next speaker can make him look like a clown immediately. All that he has to do is state, with tongue in cheek, "The previous remarks remind me of a story I've heard! 'Two men went up into the temple to pray'". Everybody seems to get the point immediately!

The word Pharisee starts a whole train of ideas, mostly correct ideas, Scripturally speaking, but often ideas that are misdirected. The usual view is that the Pharisees as a class were chief among Jesus' enemies, that they opposed Him at every turn of His teaching, and that they were a great influence in instigating and causing His death. For Bible students the word pharisaical is synonymous to such words as proud, self-righteous, hypocritical, legalistic, formalistic, greedy, and a variety of other negative adjectives. The New Testament leads us to this stereotype. And if we consult Bible dictionaries this is the picture we get!

We do Bible history an injustice, however, if we picture the members of this fraternity as ancient Frankensteins, temple vandals, or naive clowns with foot-in-mouth disease. History has been cruel, to the extreme, with this fraternity. The noun "Pharisee" had such a sting to it that it was officially banned for use as a term of disapproval in the British House of Commons in 1902, along with "hypocrite", "jackass", and "rat". When we speak of Pharisaism we do speak of obedience petrified into formalism, religious activity degenerated into self-righteous ritual, and clear, God-given laws contaminated by casuistry. But we're also speaking of a highly educated and sophisticated fraternity that believed very deeply in its goal of preserving the Torah - God's law in the Pentateuch - and thus in preserving the identity of Israelites from both pagan and worldly influence!



"I thank Thee, Lord"

In mentioning that there are some cruel, overly exaggerated descriptions of the Pharisees, we should, however, guard against a growing trend to make this fraternity respectable. Scholars of the historical critical school, drawing on the writings of modern rabbis, are making concerted efforts to rehabilitate the Pharisees. And, to follow the sequence, Lutherans are using these secondary sources and leaving us with the impression that Jesus' "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," should be toned down. In the two theological libraries consulted for reference material for this presentation, most books, with some exceptions, sought to picture the fraternity as greatly misunderstood. On the shelves of Lutheran libraries you will find quite a number of books written by such Jewish scholars as Geiger, Grätz, Finkelstein, Montefiore, Zeitlin, and others. Using rabbinic materials, and, in our estimate, speaking subjectively, these scholars soften the true, Biblical picture of the Pharisees. In contrast to these there are books by converted Jewish scholars, such as Alfred Edersheim and F. C. Gilbert, that give us quite another picture of this fraternal order. If we consider the Bible to be absolute truth, there is no way in which we can whitewash the Pharisees. Extra Biblical writings, authored by

ancient historians, ancient rabbis, or modern scholars, will either substantiate or contradict the Bible composite.

In view of what has happened in the field of scholarship, every essayist presenting a picture of the Pharisees has to ask: What are my primary sources for my material and what are secondary sources? As PRIMARY SOURCES we could list the Old and New Testament, and, to some extent the writings of the intertestamental period when the Pharisees developed a power base.

The OLD TESTAMENT plays only a background role to the Pharisees. Never once is their name mentioned although the Hebrew word "perushim", meaning "separated ones", seems to indicate the development of a spirit to be separate from contaminating influences in heathen captivity. The APOCRYPHAL BOOKS were written in a period when the spirit of separation developed into an actual organization for separation. This we call the intertestamental period going roughly from 400 B.C. to the Birth of Christ. We reject the Apocryphal writings, as part of the Old Testament Canon, because we do not believe them to be inspired. Their authorship is nebulous and the Savior never once quotes from them. But a reading of books such as the "Psalms of Solomon" and the "Assumption of Moses" does reveal some of the cherished hopes and goals of the Pharisees.

It goes without saying that the NEW TESTAMENT furnishes us with the real first-hand look at the Fraternal Order of Pharisees. The word "Pharisee" occurs almost 100 times in this portion of Scripture, 29 times in Matthew, 12 in Mark, 27 in Luke, and 19 in John. There are 9 references in Acts, but then we find the word only once in the other 22 books, namely Philipians 3:5. Here Paul refers to his life before conversion saying that he had been "as to the law a Pharisee".

Our secondary sources on the Pharisees are all extra Biblical, namely, the writings of the historian Josephus, and the traditions of the rabbis. Most of these writings are dated after the fall of Jerusalem - 70 A.D. Josephus, the author of "The Jewish War" and "Antiquities" has quite an interesting biography which should lead us to treat his evaluation of the Pharisees with great caution. In a sense he was a chameleon. Born to a priestly family in 37 A.D., he became a general in the Jewish army and was active in the Jewish revolt against Rome - 66 A.D. When the showdown came, Vespasian's army crushed the uprising. But Josephus himself survived the collapse of his army, escaped a suicide pact made with his last companions, and changed sides, ingratiating himself with his Roman rulers. In fact, he served as interpreter for the Romans during the final siege of Jerusalem. After the city had been leveled under Titus, Josephus was taken to Rome to write a history of the Jewish nation that would picture Rome as a benevolent ruler challenged by misguided Jewish nationalism.

If one follows the shifting loyalties of Josephus then one must consider him a somewhat unreliable source of information on the Pharisees. His descriptions of Pharisaical activity in "The Jewish War" differs quite widely from that given in "Antiquities", written 20 years later. The most likely explanation for such differences is Josephus' attempt to gain Roman respect for the Pharisees as a power for peace or dissension. A modern scholar advises us to take Josephus' "testimony" with a grain of salt because his writings seek to commend features in Judaism to pagan readers by portraying the Pharisees as a school of philosophy similar to some of theirs.

Another extra Biblical source of information is rabbinical literature, and especially the Talmud. Most scholars believe that the oral tradition of the Pharisees was pulled together and put into writing about the middle of the 2nd century. The writings of the Rabbis do not use the name Pharisee because the fraternity

ceased to exist in the second century. The destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 A.D., is a watershed date in Jewish history. The events of that year definitely removed the Sadducees from the scene. The other sects either died a natural death or were absorbed into the structure and activities of the Pharisees. So this fraternity was the lone survivor of the powerful groups of the past and no longer had reason to call themselves "perushim" - separated ones. When the Talmud was put into writing in the middle of the second century Pharisaism ceased to exist as a fraternity and it became what today is known as Judaism. Go to synagogues throughout the world and you will find the great influence of the Torah, and written traditions in the Talmud.

Our difficulty in using the rabbinical sources for a good picture of the Pharisees lies in the diversity of the traditions and the oral way in which they were transmitted before 70 A.D. Trying to understand what Rabbi B remembered about Rabbi A's interpretation of what Rabbi C had taught, is like trying to find a room at Michigan University Hospital without following a colored floor line! If the traditions had been preserved in writing, as the Torah of Moses was carefully preserved, then we could get a clear view of the fraternity's history and character from the rabbis themselves. As it is talk is cheap and so is oral tradition!

Realizing that there are primary and secondary sources, and together with that dependable and undependable characterizations, your essayist would not presume to create a synthesis of all resource materials on the Pharisees. Why should we join the historical critical school in rehabilitating the Pharisees? Why should we even pose questions which would infer that the Pharisees weren't really all that bad? Simply because in modern Judaism they still are objects of veneration and respect? Any unbiased Bible reader, who scans the references to the Pharisees in the Gospels and Acts, has to conclude that the black pictures of the fraternity in most Bible dictionaries is not an oversimplistic characterization, but a good and correct one.

From its very beginning as a religious philosophy and an organized fraternity till the time of the fall of Jerusalem, Pharisaism had some complimentary features. Later we shall refer to some of their good points. For the present it should be pointed out that there were "cool" men among them who sought to moderate their legalistic superlatives. And let's not forget men, such as Nicodemus, who broke the usual pattern by seeking after something more than laws and rules. However, the few pluses that we run into should not blind us to the overwhelming number of minuses we find in their character and history! If television would run a documentary on this fraternity the smallest children would call them the "bad guys".

Our study of this fraternity therefore begins with the valid conclusion that Pharisaism is an ancient heresy whose soul-damaging doctrines and practices have been evident in the church in every age, including our twentieth century. When our Lord warned His followers against the "leaven of the Pharisees", He sounded a warning which should ring with particular force today! This should become clear as we trace the history of the fraternity from its origin, through the ministry of Christ, and into the present day emergence of a hydra-headed neo-Pharisaism. Our look at ancient and modern Pharisaism is intended to expose its great evils which poison blood-bought souls and rob them of salvation. To be forewarned against an enemy is to be forearmed. If we find the spirit of Pharisaism creeping into our churches, or, worse yet, into our own breasts, let the Bible speak to us about its deadly impact. The prognosis for the disease of Pharisaism is always "terminally fatal". At the same time let the Word of God offer us the nutrients that will fortify our spirits in the daily struggle against every form of this disease. Four questions will be posed in an effort to offer strength for the daily battle against the insidious errors of an ancient, yet modern fraternity. Taking a good look at

the Pharisees we ask first of all.....

I. WHERE'D THEY COME FROM?

The name of the Pharisees, according to the most widely accepted etymology, means "the separated ones" and stems from the Hebrew root "parash". This word alludes to the origins of the fraternity which came into being as a sect which stood for complete separation from all involvement with the pagan world, be it Babylonian, Greek, or Roman. Their religious life was throughout a protest against existing tendencies to erase the lines which marked the religion of Israel from heathen idolatry. This, to some extent, explains their peculiar dress with its tassels, fringes, and phylacteries. This also tends, somewhat, to explain their exaggeration of the ceremonial laws in the Torah which relate to such things as fasts, washings, and Sabbath practices.

It is not easy to trace the specific Old Testament origins of the Pharisees' fraternity. In the case of the Rotary, to which your essayist once belonged, we can point to a definite time and place of origin. Some salesmen met in a hotel room in a large city and decided to found a service organization which would rotate its membership in the various vocations. With Pharisaic origins we cannot be that specific in any way!

Most Old Testament scholars trace the very first origins of the fraternal order of Pharisees to the period of exile in the 5th century B.C. Because of their sins the southern tribes were sent into Babylonian captivity where they remained 70 years (Dan. 1: 1-2; II Chron. 36: 14-21) In exile prophets such as Ezekiel were busy drawing the attention of the Jewish community to the LAW. They realized that only through devotion to the Law could Jewish captives retain their identity from their Babylonian conquerors. And so the synagogue, the place where the Law was studied, came into being. Scribes were the instructors in the Law and a real force in the exile community. All of these activities were God pleasing and in harmony with God's will.

In spite of the efforts of godly men, however, the people in general had departed from the Word of God in their captivity, and had lost sight of their worship of God. A study of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah reveals this. (Ezra 10; Nehemiah 10:13) Conditions in Jerusalem weren't much better. So when the captivity ended, and Ezra arrived at Jerusalem at the head of returning exiles a reform movement and religious revival took place. Ezra was the leader in this movement and he made the Law, or teaching of Moses, the central rallying point of Jewish religious life. In the Law the people discovered those requirements which were to keep them separate as the privileged custodian of Messianic hopes and dreams. Here, again, we see origins of a Pharisaic movement to be separate - "perushim". And like many heterodox churches and movements today, they started out with pure motives and goals but got miserably lost along the way.

After Ezra and his associates passed away there followed a new generation of leaders who turned their backs on the good start made by their predecessors. This is the beginning of the inter-testamental period, or the period between the last inspired book of the Old Testament and the first of the New, a period of about 400 years. The successors to Ezra and his associates formed into a sort of college called "The Great Synagogue", or Synod, (K-Nes-Seth Hagdola"). The one great object of these men seemed to be a desire to protect the Law, or to make a fence or a hedge about it, that it should be impossible for the people ever to depart from it.

Here's where the original goals of Ezra's time were lost. It can easily be understood that when the teachings of any people are left to the discretion of a few, who are to regulate their manner of living to the minutest detail, there would be unfortunate and tragic consequences. The religion of the people would soon disintegrate into mere formalism; and their piety would consist in the external observance of the legal requirements of these teachers. Worst of all, the passing of time would build up a spiritual tyranny, with these teachers as the ecclesiastical tyrants. This is a logical conclusion of such a religious arrangement. And this is exactly what happened with the Jews; so that when Christ came, the people were bound with the chains of human tradition, and they were enslaved by spiritual tyrants otherwise known as rabbis and/or Pharisees.

After the last member of the Great Synagogue passed away, the leaders of the people, who were the learned men of the Jews, took the name of "Sophrim", or scribes, because their self-appointed work was to teach the people the contents of the "Books of the Law", and to be the expositors of the Old Testament Canon. Their great concern was to make a protecting wall around the Law. To put it in other words, they so circumscribed the Word of God, according to their subjective opinions, that people were fenced in by what THEY said, and consequently their teachings were held in equal importance to the Word of God! In fact their teachings were often regarded above the Word of God! In the book, "Ethics of the Fathers", we find this statement concerning the purpose of these men: "They said three things: 'Be deliberate in judgment; train up many disciples; AND MAKE A FENCE FOR THE LAW'" (Emphasis ours)

This they did, and did with a vengeance! Over the years hundreds of these fence or hedge laws, known as "seyag" - Hebrew for "fence", were transmitted orally and imposed upon the unsuspecting. A rabbinical leader would hand his fence laws to the school of teachers which he headed and they in turn would give them to the people. The fence laws received the name, "Torah Shel Bapeh" - the law of the mouth, or the oral law. The Old Testament Canon was called the "Torah Shbekthav", or the written law. As history progressed, one rabbi would leave certain sayings to his successors, and these were preserved in the school of the leading rabbi. Then if any teacher made a statement which people may have doubted, all that he had to say was, "I heard such and such a rabbi say it!" That ended the matter.

In addition to supplementing the Torah of Moses with fence laws, the fraternity of Pharisees also felt called of God to create new laws. "Why should we abide absolutely by rules made centuries ago?". they reasoned. Social, economic, and moral climates change they felt, and the law would have to change with it to apply. So they made new laws, called "gezarot" for the changing conditions. As with every heresy the Pharisees supported their presumptuous actions with a misinterpretation of Bible verses, for instance, Deut. 17:9, which reads: "And thou shalt come unto the priests and Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment." These ecclesiastical con men even went so far as to claim their oral expositions of law were in direct succession from Moses. In "The Ethics of the Fathers" we read, "Moses received the law from Sinai, and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue!"

All of these fence laws were eventually incorporated into the book known as the Talmud in the 2nd century A.D. This well known book is therefore the product of teachers who lived over a period of centuries beginning with the return from Babylonian captivity. The Talmud consists of two great divisions: The "Mishna", a commentary or text on the Old Testament Scriptures, containing nearly 5,000

sections or traditions; and the "Gemara", the commentary of the Mishna, containing hundreds of thousands of laws, illustrations, allegories, definitions, and miscellaneous sayings on anything and everything. Considering its questionable development one historian is candid in calling it: "That wonderful monument of human industry, human wisdom, and human folly!"

With this background of the history and development of fence laws, or tradition, if you will, it is easy to understand how the Pharisees contributed to the petrification of the faith and hope which once lived in the hearts of patriarchs, prophets, saints, and God-fearing leaders, in previous history. A body of man-made laws was gradually set up alongside the Law once given to Moses by God. As this process grew the teachers insisted that tradition was equal to Scripture. By the year 150 B.C. the Pharisaic view of the super importance of traditions was firmly established and caused a split in the ranks of the religious teachers, dividing them into two opposing parties, Pharisees and Sadducees. The former defended the Torah plus tradition, and the latter the written text alone with no additions or expositions. Along with the growth in traditions, the religion of the Pharisees hardened into an external, formal, and legalistic show. They forgot the spirit of the Law which included such things as righteousness, love, mercy, and faithfulness, and proudly stressed the showy externals. In the wake of the perennial growth of supplementary regulations to God's law, there followed self-righteous displays of the obedient life, and worst of all hypocrisy. Sinful thoughts and actions were neatly covered by outward shows of piety.

In contrast to the many negative features of the Pharisees, we must not fail to mention some of the assets in their historical development. A total view of their growth reveals they had tremendous potential for good. One modern writer states that they could easily have furnished a welcoming committee for Jesus since they possessed so many God-pleasing qualities. In passing we will mention a few:

- Their belief in the inspiration of all the Old Testament Scripture. If the Canon mentioned that the waters of the Red Sea formed walls to escort Israel out of Egypt they accepted it without flinching!
- Their respect for the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws of Moses.
- A belief in the resurrection was a key item in Pharisaic doctrine. "The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees acknowledge them all." (Acts 23:8)
- They were great missionaries and very "school minded" as we say in our circles. In both their teaching and mission activities, they stressed Law and tradition but also kept alive the hopes for that Messiah promised to the fathers.

Yet the members of this fraternal order failed to recognize Christ as their Messiah. This happened because all of their positive features were negated by countless errors which developed in their doctrine and practice.

If we are to pinpoint a period before Christ when Pharisaism changed from a movement to preserve the Law to an identifiable fraternity, with a name and an organized structure, that period would go from about the middle of the second century B.C. to the middle of the first. This period of history reads more like a modern historical novel on the best seller list than ancient history. It is an account of great courage, daring adventures, and deep loyalty to the faith of Israel. It also is a history which includes political intrigue, assassinations, and the mass murder of Jewish loyalists.

It will serve our purpose in this essay merely to mention the events in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), who was master of Jerusalem and Judea at the beginning of the era, mentioned before, when structured Pharisaism emerged. This King, Antiochus, is called a "Monster" and even an "Ancient Hitler" by some Old Testament students. One of his avowed purposes was to decimate the faith of Israel and to completely hellenize Judea, that is, to turn it to Greek culture, philosophy, and idolatry. He supported his goals with military force, sacking Jerusalem and killing thousands of its citizens. After taking the city he profaned the temple and introduced sacrifices to his pagan god, the Olympian Zeus, on a pagan altar. As in every subjugation there were Jewish collaborators, but for the majority of loyal Israelites this desecration of the sacred center of worship was mockery and blasphemy which roiled their blood and invited a death defying resistance movement.

There followed what Winston Churchill would call one of the "finest hours" in Jewish history. Completely outnumbered, and with their backs to the wall, the Jews organized themselves into guerilla groups and fought undercover. Many a bloody and discouraging battle was fought by this handful of insurgents. Yet their determination brought victory, for after being badly mauled, the Jews regained their freedom under their famous leader Judas Maccabaeus in 165 B.C. This man is a great idol of Judaism to this day.

Even though this war, known today as the Maccabean war against Hellenistic influence, was vicious and horrifying, it served the good purpose of renewing patriotic fervor and religious pride among the Jews. And in this era of revival, we see the first official mention of the Pharisees as a fraternity, with great political and religious influence. They withdrew themselves from other patriotic parties being real "perushim", or "separated ones", and let their presence be known till Christ's birth, during His ministry, until the time after Jerusalem's destruction when Pharisaism and Judaism became synonymous.

II. WHAT'D THEY DO IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY?

What should interest pastors and teachers particularly is the picture of the Fraternal order of Pharisees at the time of Christ. What was their size then? What was their forum or staging area? Their organizational structure? Their image before the populace and Roman authorities? As church leaders we restrict our ability to guide precious sheep and lambs if we have only a partial knowledge of the "community" that is so prominent in Jesus' ministry.

As to size, Josephus tells us there were 6,000 Pharisees living in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Since Jerusalem and environs had a population of approximately 500,000, this means that the ratio of Pharisees to people would have been 2 to 83. They spread their religious views in the temple and particularly through 480 synagogues which dotted the countryside.

The greatest rival of Pharisaism was the sect of Sadducees. The rivalry took place on various levels. On a social level, Josephus tells us, that the Sadducees have "the confidence of the wealthy alone but no following among the populace, while the Pharisees have the support of the masses." On a vocational level, the Sadducees performed priestly functions primarily, while the Pharisees were mostly rabbis or teachers of Law and tradition in the synagogues. This does not mean that Pharisees avoided the rubrics of the temple or that the Sadducees were absent from the synagogue. It merely means that there was a rivalry of

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function, and thus a rivalry between two religious institutions, the temple and the synagogue.

The fraternity consisted of many educated and professional people, such as lawyers and scribes, but most members were insignificant laymen who were businessmen, fishermen, or manual laborers. The leaders were often from the "Upper 500" but the general membership was middle class. To join a neophyte had to choose between various schools whose teachings differed in varying degrees. There was nothing monolithic or homogenous about Pharisaism any more than this is true of Lutheranism today. When Christ was born the two most prominent schools were led by Hillel and Shammai. Each school had regular meetings, was led by a chief Pharisee (cf. Luke 14:1) and shared a communal meal.

Structurally the Pharisees were organized much like the Masonic lodge. As the three degrees of the Blue Lodge are the most important to masonry today (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason), so the first two degrees of the Pharisees lodge were the most significant of all. They were called Neeman and Chabher. The object of all the fraternities belonging to the Association, called the "Chaburah", was two-fold, according to Edersheim: 1) to observe the ordinances of Levitical purity, and 2) and to pay dues, and tithes, required by the law. A Neeman undertook the responsibility relating to tithes and dues. As such he was regarded as an "accredited one". A Chabher, or associate, undertook both obligations fully. The fraternity's membership was not open, and some steps were necessary before joining. Some were accepted after a short probation and others waited as long as a year. Incidentally, Josephus became a Pharisee at age 19, after having made application with the Sadducees and Essenes.

When we speak of the image of the Pharisees, it seems they were generally admired by the people of their day, although they also had detractors. People loved their sets of values, and their rules and regulations. They depended on the advice of Pharisees for everyday decisions. In the ranks of the Pharisees were such men as the deliberative and understanding Gamaliel, the seeking and inquisitive Nicodemus, and the knowledgeable and dedicated Paul. The Holy Spirit re-channeled the assets of the last two for Gospel purposes.



"Beware of the leaven"

A slow survey of the four Gospels and Acts reveals that our Lord and the Pharisees were on a collision course from the outset of His ministry. The Pharisees dogged His footsteps in groups but mostly as petty detectives on the fringe of the crowd who watched for something to discredit Him. The first confrontation came with Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist. An official delegation went into the desert to check him out because his forceful preaching drew crowds and centered on three areas: The Messiah, repentance, and Baptism with water. All three subjects were of importance to them and their teachings. When they ran down their checklist, John revealed his identity as the forerunner, defended his baptism as not infringing on their petty province, and then pointed to the coming Messiah who would baptize with the Holy Ghost! Neither John's mockery of their proud traditions or his pointed calls of repentance made an impact on the delegates who heard him. They were as rigid and inflexible when they left as when they came!

In portraying the activities of the fraternity in the ministry of Christ, all four Gospel writers give us many examples of its abuses and errors. As we turn the pages of Holy Writ we find the Pharisees "Mickey-Mousing" around with washings, taking great pains to fulfill fasting and tithing requirements, using ingenious oaths to dodge God-given responsibilities, and carefully guarding first century blue laws relating to Sunday. All these actions were only the outside sores. Inside of their hearts was the real religious illness. These were the fever, but it took the Lord Jesus to identify the troubling infection.

When we trace Jesus' confrontations with members of the fraternity we find the same diagnosis offered more than once: MAN-MADE TRADITION AND RULES! Repeatedly Jesus speaks of their basic illness. "You have let go of the commandments of God and are holding on to the traditions of men," (Mark 7:8; 7:13) "Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites, you give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin but you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness." (Matt. 23:23) Jesus does not condemn their traditions per se, but He clearly denounces the way they put them on a level with the Scriptures. Together with this, Jesus decried their legalistic insistence on conformity to something which is a matter of liberty to the discerning child of God.

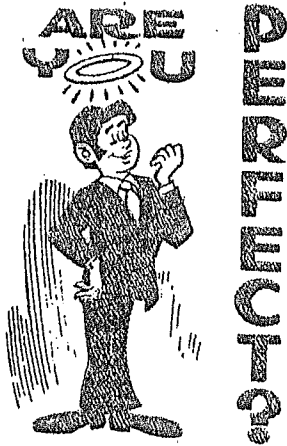
Time will never permit us to list all the external rashes and sores which were caused by the real religious sickness of the Pharisees - traditionalism. In our Bible study we get a view of them often enough. Just for the sake of review, we will name a few of them and leave the application to the next section on neo-Pharisaism. Some of the ugly manifestations of Pharisaic traditionalism are:

PERVERTED EVANGELISM: Among the eight woes spoken against the fraternity at the end of Jesus' ministry is this one: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice a son of hell as you are." (Matt. 23:15) Jesus' introductory words to these "woes" are a commentary on what He means "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders." (Matt. 23:4a)

LEGALISTIC ABUSE: Instead of jumping up and down with joy at the miraculous healings of Jesus, they offered criticism for His abuse of "their" interpretation of Sabbath Laws. Their "blue laws" came up for discussion on seven different occasions. Five discussions related to healings - a shriveled hand, dropsy, a bowed back, an invalid, and a blind man. The end result of the last named miracle, healing the blind man (John 9), was their form of excommunication. The Pharisees "threw him out". The other two instances when the Sabbath question arose were when the disciples picked grain and when a question was posed relating to the Sabbath.

We read of these evidences of legalistic abuse in the Gospels and must react with amazement! How legalistic can you get! They forgot mercy and the Spirit of the Law. Why even the rabbi Hillel, a contemporary of Christ, was rescued in a snowstorm on the Sabbath, and he agreed the laws could be suspended when life hung in the balance. Worse than that, the members of the fraternity deliberately ignored the miracles as credentials for Jesus' Messianic nature. These are outlined in Isaiah 35: 5-6 and Isaiah 61:1. Jesus referred to these credentials when John the Baptist had scruples about whether He was "the One to come" (Matt. 11:4-5). Their proud purpose was to be rulers of piety and to put their own peculiar straitjacket on Jesus and those He blessed.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS: In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18: 9-14), Jesus shows His scorn for the self-glorification of Pharisees. There stands the Pharisee before God, in Jesus' parable. What he speaks is a caricature of prayer since it includes a record of his religious achievements and uses the favorite pronoun "I" five times. There is no hint of repentance in the monologue.



Jesus' reaction to the Pharisees self-righteousness reminds us of the story of an egoist who went to see a discerning physician complaining of a headache. The doctor, upon examination asked, "Do you feel a distressing pain in the forehead?" "Yes," said the patient. "And a throbbing pain in the back of your head?" "Yes!" "And piercing pains here at the temples?" "Oh yes!" "Well," the doctor explained, "Your halo is on too tight!" The Lord told hearers that penitents who seek mercy, and not self-righteousness, are justified before God!

FORMALISM OR GRANDSTAND RELIGION: Part of the big show for the Pharisees was the wearing of phylacteries and a super-emphasis on fasts. To show their tendency to be grandstanders we mention only the phylacteries.

When the fraternity read Exodus 13, vv. 9 and 16 it took these verses literally, not figuratively. These verses state the Law "shall be a sign unto thee upon thy hands and for a memorial between thine eyes." In keeping with their interpretations, Pharisees made leather boxes into which they placed four specific scriptural passages and then placed them on their arm and forehead at morning prayer. Jesus, of course, objected to them because they made a parade of them, widening them so they would become more noticeable. A reading of the auxiliary laws regulating the wearing of phylacteries reads like the daily comics.



"make broad their phylacteries"

HYPOCRISY: The Pharisees developed an ingenious system of evasive morality or selective righteousness, call it what you will. They set the pace for modern church goers who live like the devil during the week and act like angels in the narthex and at congregational functions. Jesus' reference to their use of "Corban" illustrates how they hypocritically crossed their fingers when they took their vows and made their pledges of faithfulness to God's will (Mark 7: 10-12).

The word "Corban" specifies any gift dedicated to God and it appears in various forms in seventy passages in the Old Testament. The New Testament word for the temple treasury is another variation of the same word (Matt. 27:6). So if a person had promised to give a donation to God, that gift became "Corban", whether it was given immediately or pledged for a future date. Great hypocrisy accompanied this practice. To illustrate: If a son wanted to evade helping his needy parents, he simply had to indicate that his available resources were "Corban"---devoted to God. That freed him of filial responsibility!

To this hypocrisy Jesus said, "Nonsense!" Rabbis might defend the practice where it often appeared by saying, "It is hard for the parents, but the law is clear, vows must be kept." Jesus indicated the Law was given to help and not to harm. The paraphrase of the Living Bible is helpful to get Jesus' point relating to their hypocrisy. "It is recorded in Mark 7: 10-13.

The list of open sores in the fraternity could be supplemented by others as RIGOTRY, CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, etc. Wherever Jesus saw the community avoid tax collectors, or treat gross sinners as beyond hope, He showed the seeking, forgiving love that led Him to Calvary. Undoubtedly there were cool heads and men of the highest order in the ranks of the Pharisees. The writings of the rabbis speak of reform movements in the various schools which made up the Association. But conceding this fact, and also the fact that the confrontations with Jesus were not with the executive committee of their organization, they were an association of charlatans and hypocrites. That is the picture of them given by our primary source - the BIBLE.

Finally the climax of the confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees ended in the crucifixion at Calvary. While many others were responsible for killing the Prince of Life, including us 20th century sinners, the Pharisees were some of the primary agents who outlined the plot and carried the screaming injustice to its terrible end. In the Gospel accounts it is easy to see the plans of the Pharisees formulate and finally gel. Driven by envy, hatred, and demonic efforts to protect their worldly fraud of Messianic dreams, they set out to solve the "Jesus problem."

Part of the Fraternity's technique was to set Jesus up with cleverly worded questions relating to subjects like the Sabbath, divorce, and taxes. Jesus saw through their diabolical intent to entrap and discredit Him. We hear Him saying, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?" Matt. 22:18.

Where words failed to end the "Jesus problem", actual formulated plans grew and led them to their desired goal. After our Lord healed the man with the shriveled hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath, their boiling point rose and they started discuss "What they might do with Jesus (Luke 6:11). After our Lord healed the disabled person at the pool of Bethesda, the same type of welcome mat was rolled out "For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him." John 5:18. That these Jews included Pharisees is clear from the entire account. Murder being in their planning, Jesus began avoiding the headquarters of the fraternity in Judea because He knew the contract was out to kill Him. (John 7:1)

But in the end Jesus returned to the southern province to fulfill His Father's redemptive will and to become the victim of Pharisaic hatred. It all happened shortly after the raising of Lazarus. No incident was more devastating to the fraternity than reviving a man dead for four days. Let John tell about the joint meeting and the joint plans of the Pharisees and chief priests. He does it by inspiration: "What are we accomplishing?" they asked "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will put their trust in Him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our Nation." John 11: 47-48. With the "whole world gone after" Jesus the members of the Jewish ruling council - the Sanhedrin - knew they were walking on eggs. If the Roman empire suspected an uprising it could send in the marines to restore order, depose leading priests, and even scatter a few thousand insurgents throughout the empire. So the plan was finalized. John says, "the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so they might arrest Him." The last detail of the plan is the scene on Calvary where the sinless Son of God endured mockery from the position of His cross in the center of two malefactors, from the multi-lingual title above the cross, and the scornful remarks under the cross.

With the crucifixion the final judgment on the original Pharisees was sealed. An examination of the rhetoric of our Lord reveals that there was a time when He ended the efforts of bringing hope and salvation to this group of leaders among God's people. Near the beginning of His ministry Jesus pronounced eight blessings

or beatitudes upon a certain kind of people. At the end of His ministry He pronounced about eight woes upon a certain other kind of people - the Pharisees and their allies. Parables, questions, and answers gave place to public warning and to His eschatological Olivet discourse in which He predicts the leveling of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. While we might be led to think that the barrage of woes was hurled at a large representative group of Pharisees, the Bible context (Matt. 23) leads us to conclude that His last blasts were more in the nature of an apostrophe. Jesus was speaking "to the multitude, and to His disciples" with some Pharisees, most likely, forming part of His audience.

III. ARE THEY STILL AROUND TODAY?

We have mentioned before that the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) is a watershed mark in Jewish history. When this happened the Pharisees survived the destruction of the temple and their favorite meeting places by disseminating their teachings through the network of synagogues established in Palestine and in lands where Jewish people were dispersed through captivity. During the actual siege of Jerusalem, Johanan ben Zakkai, the ages most famous doctor of law, succeeded in leaving the attacked city and obtained permission from General Titus to go to Jamnia and open a rabbinical school, thus assuring the preservation of the oral traditions. As time went on the oral traditions were collected, written out, codified, and presented with expositions, in the TALMUD. Most students of history agree that the TALMUD came into being about the middle of the second century. At that time the Ancient Order of Pharisees ceased to exist and Pharisaism and Judaism were co-extensive, for nowhere do we find any of the rabbinical literature of that period using the name "Pharisee."

So we might say, "Great!" The funeral of the Pharisaical fraternity took place long ago, and everybody that resented its nasty habit of breathing down other people's necks could pass around the bier and have a good time! We today could conclude that this is one sect that would not add to the tensions of our ministries as pastors and teachers. But we do know better! The vexations and tyrannical demands of neo-Pharisaism plagues all of our ministries, and it causes particular headaches for elected officials on a district or synodical level. Who is it often calls up a district official in the middle of the 11:00 P.M. news? Who is it who is constantly running to neighboring pastors trying to bend the nearest ear? Too often for comfort it is a modern, self-righteous Pharisee who has lost the spirit of love which permeates the Gospel, insisting rather on his will, the letter of the law, and on extra-Biblical tradition. The migrants of our mobile society, who wander into our churches insisting that we "do it like they did it" back at good old St. Paul's, Livonia, Michigan, are a particularly trying branch of the modern school. It's quoting Rabbi Hillel or Rabbi Shammi all over again. One would like the entire copy of their Talmud instead of getting it orally line by line, and week by week.

In the only exhaustive essay in our circles which relates to modern Pharisaism, President Toppe describes the evidences of their abuses and errors in the 20th Century. The essay is entitled "A Time-Honored Warning Against Present Dangers to the Church From Pharisaism" and it was delivered to the West Wisconsin District in 1948. The essay relates to Jesus' warning, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." It begins with the proverb of Solomon - "There is nothing new under the sun" - and then goes on to picture the ancient heresy in modern garb. The essay covers 40 pages in the 1951 Quartalschrift and a great number of these pages are devoted to Catholicism, Masonry, and particularly Scouting, as 20th century evidences of neo-Pharisaism. This essay, and other references, indicate that there is no identical

contemporary group to which we can point and say, "There they are, those....." It's a ridiculous game to try to find an exact parallel. But neo-Pharisaism is alive and well on planet earth wherever the errors and abuses of the old fraternity raise their ugly heads.

Your essayist will not spend time picturing neo-Pharisaism in present-day denominations, organizations, or fraternal orders. He will confine himself to areas where it presents problems for our ministries. But to make a short departure into present-day denominations, it is interesting to learn what happened at the convention of the United Presbyterian Church in Detroit only a few weeks ago. At this convention your essayist was a part-time witness. Seismic waves shook that gathering. These seismic waves came in various forms, namely, protests against accepting a pastor (?) like Rev. Kaseman of Rockville, Maryland into their ministerium, since he denies Christ's deity and the Trinity; protests against forced representation of women on church boards and the clergy roster; and the secession of large churches, and prominent pastors, who see no light in the doctrinal disintegration taking place. And how did the body react to the seismic waves? By passing legalistic fence laws just like some ancient relatives at Christ's time. Among the resolutions was one declaring all property is held in trust for the parent church body. In other words, you leave us because you don't like our practices, and we take your property even if the vote to withdraw is next to unanimous. Another resolution was designed to insist that every single church have at least one woman on the governing board. How silly.

Well here's what Presbyterian pastor Robert W. Mulholland wrote about this in the Presbyterian Layman: "The delegated bodies of the church have claimed powers to rule over us, now asserting that Presbyterianism is an heirarchical form of government and that the authority rests with the 'courts' of the church, they being the heirarchy. This is Romanism pure and simple, for Romanism declares that the Pope and the priests are the Church whether there are any people or not, and that all authority rests with this heirarchy. This is the very thing that led to the Reformation, caused bloodshed in Scotland, and led our forebears to seek freedom. To return to this kind of enslavement is a hopeless regression. It is neither Biblical nor Apostolic nor Presbyterian." We might add it's an example of the "fence laws" of the Pharisees which are worded in today's language.

While Pharisaism as a sect has ceased to exist the spirit of the fraternity survives and continues to grow. And there is no Biblical assurance that any Christian body, including W.E.L.S., can build up an immunity against this spirit outside of the antitoxin of God's Word. The words of one of your District leaders, in our official church paper, presents a timely warning.

"Herewith are a few random samples of Pharisaism as it might appear among us today:

- When labeling ourselves sinners becomes to us a badge of honor rather than a confession of guilt so that we in effect take pride in our humility.
- When instead of bowing humbly before God's Word, we draw ourselves up to full height as its noble defenders.
- When we uphold the truth in order to win a personal victory rather than to dispel soul-destroying error.
- When we use the Word of God to whip the sinner into line rather than to bring him to the feast.
- When we use the Word of God as a searchlight to expose the faults of others and forget that it is to be a lamp unto our feet.
- When we set forth the Gospel as a position to conform to rather than as a gift to accept.

When we look upon the Word of God as a weapon of assault to beat down our enemies rather than as a guide to the knowledge of the truth.

All these things may make us appear 101 per cent orthodox and twice as right as anyone else, but they breathe the spirit of ancient Pharisaism just the same."

Because members of our Synod, and full time church workers can easily fit the Biblical composite of a real Pharisee, it is helpful to ask questions such as: Are the Pharisees around today? And, if so, where do we find them? In answer to these key questions, a number of clues will be offered from Bible history and secular history to help us spot open or hidden Pharisees who might be promoting their rigid, loveless, teachings in our W.E.L.S. fellowship. These clues are offered with the understanding that we do not become Pharisees ourselves by hastily typing others in our minds, or by making reference to current problems of a Pharisaic nature which may exist.

We will find the Pharisaic fraternity in modern church life wherever oppressive rules, fence laws, regulations, and traditions are used as a substitute for the clear truth of God's Word and then restrict our Christian liberty. The Bible is clear in outlining God's plan of salvation, and the commands of God which relate to holy living and kingdom responsibilities. However problems arise when our Lord hands us back a great deal of freedom in carrying out His will. He lets us decide about our methods in stewardship efforts, our evangelism techniques, and our educational programs. In our personal lives, He lets us decide about our type of recreation, our estate planning, our clothes, and everyday habits.

To many this freedom is frightening and they go scurrying off to someone with a father image and an authoritative ring in his voice. Unfortunately there often is a religious con artist readily available. It could be a pastor, a day school teacher, or an opinionated leader in the church whose Pharisaic blood seems to be hereditary. This person is happy to offer advice and place Christianity in neat little categories. This is right! This is wrong! Everything is painted with two crayons which are black and white. The gray crayon, standing for Christian liberty, seems to be out of stock.

Wherever our consciences are tyrannized by those who would set private traditions, rules, and methods for us, we can find comfort in the fact that the Lord observes our faithfulness to His Word and will. And that Word tells us to defy those who would put us in the straight jacket of their private thinking. Jesus said to the Pharisees, in essence, "Don't tire me with your petty little rules, regulations, and methods" (Mark 7:8). He set the tone for our ministries. And a former Pharisee, who saw the tyranny of others setting up oppressive rules to new converts, tells us, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery." (Gal. 5:1; See also Col. 2:8).

LEGALISM is another manifestation of neo-Pharisaism. Its effect is withering and devastating to pastors, teachers, or church members who are made to feel its hot breath from the modern members of the fraternity who become self-appointed religious enforcers. How often haven't we seen the ministry of a full time church worker greatly hampered by a legalist. And self-pitying remarks such as, "I'll be glad to be with him in heaven, but what a pain on earth!" do not lighten the burden.

If the devil cannot succeed in destroying a conscience he will settle for making it sick. There are workers in our church body who seem to live in a constant state of distress fearing they may displease God. Their world of permitted acts becomes

narrower with passing time till they fear their smallest efforts are out of accepted bounds. Self-torture seems to be proof of godliness.

How can God's people get in such a condition? Often, through the legalistic pressure of others who want the beautiful fruit of positive Christian living shriveled into a negative creed of "don'ts" and "can'ts". Legalism is debilitating to God's servants because it is serious confusion of Law and Gospel. It is the subtle, often unconscious effort, in which church people seek to accomplish by means of the Law what only the Gospel can do! For instance it is legalism pure and simple, when people are threatened, frightened, or shamed into behaving like Christians, giving for their church, or even going to church. It is also legalism when the law so predominates in the pulpit that the Gospel never has a chance to become the motivating saving power God wants it to be!

True Lutheranism insists strongly on the proper use of the Law as a mirror for our sins, a curb for temptations, and a rule for the Old Adam which is still part of us. The last mentioned is the well known "third use of the law." We are not antinomian. That issue was settled Scripturally in the 16th century. But wherever legalistic pressure is used to get results or whip someone into line the words of an ex-Pharisee should be repeated: "Christ died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again." II Cor. 5:15. This Gospel truth softens the hearts of reluctant church members to do God's will as easily as the sun melts wax.

It should not be necessary, at a Convention such as this, to spend a lot of time with SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GRANDSTAND RELIGION both of which are vividly illustrated in Jesus' parable "The Pharisee and the Publican". If the Pharisee's fasting and tithing were billboards announcing their reputed holiness to others, and particularly to God, we have our modern billboards also. These are the grandstand givers who make large donations where it shows, but neglect the regular and proportionate giving that counts. There are the showy activists who often feel that the crowded schedule of meetings down at the church is the real way to please God. They complain a lot, but when the suggestion is made to telescope a few meetings so there is more room for family time, and for public and family Bible study, it becomes obvious how much they really love their showy, peripheral piffle. Yes, all of us have the tendency toward subjectivism, which grabs for status symbols ranging from the gift of tongues to past services in the church, and uses them as spot announcements of our great works. Jesus takes a swipe at all these showy, self-righteous actions by telling us that blow-hards aren't going to get God's smile until they show an attitude of humility, penitence, and faith in God's mercy!

In His well-known valedictory to the Pharisees Jesus elaborated about the "grandstand" syndrome by mentioning how they rush for the seats of honor at banquets. (Matt. 23: 5-7). The implications of this behavior becomes staggering when we think of modern day tendencies to focus on people instead of the Lord Jesus Christ. The religious press is offering a lot of books which tend to glorify individuals. The search for the most exciting "born again" experience is escalating. The lecture circuit, tape ministry, workshop/seminar sessions, and crusades, are also involved. If name people, success stories, and sensational experiences can be tied to them, then they will succeed. In W.E.L.S. we may not have a divorced, orange saleslady, or a president's hatchetman to highlight our programs, but the temptation is strong to use "name" people to enhance our kingdom efforts. So an ex Pharisee reminds us of his modus operandi. "When I came to you brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (I Cor. 2:

When it comes to FORMALISM the members of the ancient fraternity have many modern-day relatives. We can use this ancient sect as a whipping post, but it can also serve as a mirror, directing our attention to what might go on in our churches. A look in this mirror reveals that it is easy for us today to concentrate on external forms while being indifferent to inward spirituality. How often our church members seem satisfied to just belong and to go through the external routine. They attend services and the Communion altar, send their children to our schools and Sunday schools, serve on boards from time to time, drop their dues in the plate, etc. But too often for comfort we look in vain for evidences of consistent heart-deep devotion.

One of the most obvious areas to look for formalism is in modern prayer life. It is easy to make prayer dental instead of cordial. It is easy to mummify it by vain repetitions or concerted efforts to storm heaven for an answer. The idea of the Oriental prayer wheel strikes us as quite funny, but it is possible for us to outdo it in our churches.

The Bible references to prayer speak of this privilege being voluntary and heart-felt. When God's children prayed the length, the type, and style of praying varied widely. Their prayers were inspired by the faith that God's loving will would be done. Knowing this, the Bible's warnings against formalistic prayer are always in place. (Matt. 6:7; Matt. 15:8; Jas. 1: 5-6) Prayer is not a veneer to dress up our services. It is not a luxury to be enjoyed by the highly disciplined and organized. It is an open highway to God's help, with ready access, for everyone who is ready to take it.

Warnings should also be sounded against the HYPOCRISY of 20th century Pharisaiism. The pent-up power released in the woes pronounced upon hypocrites by Jesus - Matthew 23 - must dispel any complacency and alert everyone who belongs to His church. We shrink from the remotest implication of hypocrisy among our people, but it does exist, and, wherever it does, we must seek forgiveness and correction for this sin of duplicity.

Our local assemblies can be plagued by a modern Pharisee at any given moment. Prefixed by some statement of humility, behind which to hide arrogance, a good member of the congregation sometimes is heard to express his personal opinion as the "will of God" for other members, the pastor, or a teacher. When a true prophet, of Bible history proclaimed, "thus saith the Lord," he didn't include any observation concerning himself or his humility. Where hypocritical tendencies of this nature exist, the disturber of the peace can be reminded what evangelical Truth actually is, and warned of pride under the guise of humility.

To these evidences of the 20th century neo-Pharisaiism many others could be added. If the old fraternity ignored certain classes in gaining converts, we can fall into a similar evangelistic bigotry. Jesus did not say, "Go ye exclusively into all the neatly combed U.S. suburbs and gain the drifting WASE'S there by reaffirmation. He would also have the teeming millions on foreign shores and in inner cities to be saved. If the old fraternity put undue stress on accepted ritual and ceremony, we too can go off on a tangent in that area. Our confessions correctly tell us that we have liberty in forms or rituals. Why go "high church" and force an unfamiliar liturgy on an established church just because it's of "ancient vintage"? Or why resist using a simplified liturgy in mission fields where so many are either uneducated or unfamiliar with our rich, but often difficult, liturgical heritage. These evidences will suffice to show that we don't have to look hard for a modern Pharisee. You might even find him here at recess using some of the old cliches like, "At least, I'm not a Pharisee", or better yet, "You were steeped in sin at birth, how dare you lecture us!" (John 9:34)

IV. HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THEIR ERRORS?

We deal with the errors of modern Pharisaism by following the doctrines and practices which are outlined in Scripture. This is not a simplistic answer. In Scripture we see how our Lord, and His followers in the early church, dealt with the "Pharisee problem". They met it head on when it sought to enforce man-made traditions as a way towards salvation! They proclaimed the joyful truth that liberty from the penalty and power of sin came through the Offering made on Calvary. That's what the Savior told a Pharisee who came to Him secretly. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3: 14-15)

That's also what Jesus followers re-emphasized in the face of insidious encroachments of Pharisaical tyranny in a movement we today call Judaism. Remember it was the Pharisees who insisted on the Jewish legal rites of circumcision, ceremonial washings, and dietary regulations, that precipitated the doctrinal discussions at the Council of Jerusalem. (Acts 15:5) The answer to these shenanigans by Christ's servants is clear! We hear Peter saying "Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?" We hear Paul making this statement in relation to the same problem: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Gal. 5:1)

From the time of the Reformation, Lutheranism has continued to stress the liberty we have in Christ and through Christ. Martin Luther's treatise "On the Council and the Churches" shows his disgust for the pronouncements of church councils because they were often arbitrary and contrary to Bible truth. But in this treatise Luther does show the value of conventions in suppressing attacks against articles of faith made by heretics of the time. To make this point, he reviews the proceedings of the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and the first four ecumenical councils: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451). In developing his theme, Luther warns against the enslavement of false doctrine, and highlights the liberating power of the Gospel. For him it was God's saving Word--that, and nothing more! No decisions of councils! No pronouncements of learned men! No additions of any kind! Sola Scriptura!

We follow the Reformer when we, too, use the Word of God as the Sword of the Spirit and carefully guard the liberty we have in Christ. The Truth which a converted Pharisee spoke almost two milleniums ago is well known. But it has to be recalled and repeated frequently. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph. 2:9)

We also follow the Reformer when we carefully guard the liberty we have through Christ. This is not an argument for obstructionism! In our W.E.L.S. churches, members work together and use a variety of methods and programs to carry out our Lord's will relating to funding, evangelism, education, etc. In all this we "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3) But when specific programs and methods are imposed on us as though they were divine fiats, then we lose our freedom. We'll let President Toppe speak on this point in words from his 1948 essay on Pharisaism: "There is an ever present danger of legalism, of making the Gospel a law and of making the Church a legislative body with power to regulate the lives and affairs of Christians by law instead of using the Gospel to increase the love of Christ in the hearts of the people and depending upon that love to do the works that need to be done. Some of us prefer to have some

higher authority in the church lay down a program for us and demand that we conform to it, penalizing those who do not (e.g., the Synod Building Fund). We frequently prefer to be legislated into works of righteousness rather than to do them because our hearts 'throb and surge with the Spirit's power'. But legislating Christian life and conduct is Reformed Pharisaism; we must ever guard our freedom against it." What was stated two decades ago with specific reference to a program which was being offered can have present day applications.

Closely related to this subject of the liberty we have in and through Christ is the subject of Christ's righteousness. Pharisaism and the Gospel of salvation are incompatible and mutually exclusive when it comes to this subject. All modern Pharisees teach salvation by personal works of righteousness. The stress on good works has increased since Walter Rauschenbusch offered the Social Gospel from his stamping area in inner city New York, called Hell's Kitchen, at the beginning of this century. Every recent religious survey shows how much stress church people, including Lutherans, place on personal righteousness.

How important it is, therefore, to use our opportunities in daily church life to remind our hearers, be they members or prospects, that there are essentially only two religions in the world: the religion of the Pharisees which teaches righteousness by works and ends with God's curse, and the Gospel which offers righteousness through faith in the redeeming blood of Christ! The former says "Do!" and the latter says "Done!" Plane crews returning from successful air raids during World War II radioed triumphantly to their bases, "Mission Accomplished!" With the words from the cross, "It is finished!", our Savior completed the greatest mission this world has ever known. As our Substitute, He kept the Law of God perfectly in our stead and paid the price demanded for our sins. Now we are declared righteous and forgiven in God's sight. Since this is Gospel truth it must be given saturation publicity in our self-righteous society. "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." (Rom. 10:4)

As we carry our pastoral, teaching, and lay ministries we can deal with errors of modern members of the Fraternal Order of Pharisees by always properly distinguishing between Law and Gospel. We know how to define Law and Gospel from past training. But when it comes to the application of Law and Gospel in our kingdom work, then we run into some real sand traps. "Whoever knows well the art of distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel, call him a doctor of Holy Scripture," Luther said.

One reader of the Bible discovered the difference between Law and Gospel for himself. He was reading the Good Book for the first time. "Doris," he said after reading a few chapters, "if this Book is right, we are wrong." He was reading the Law. After reading further, he said, "Doris, if this book is right, we are lost." The Law does both: It shows us our sin; it shows us that we are lost. The Law consists of the Commandments of the Moral Law and other requirements which demand perfect conformity to God's will. Because we fail in this, God's Word condemns us!

There is no evangelical Law in Holy Scripture. Luther calls a law which does not condemn a "Bockhirsch", an imaginary animal. The divine law has teeth. "It always accuses," says the Augsburg Confession:

The man who discovered the meaning of the Law from his first reading of Scripture also found out what the Gospel is. "Doris," he exclaimed, "if this Book is right, we are saved!" He had discovered the Gospel. The Gospel makes no demands. It tells us what God has done and still does for our salvation. The Gospel brings us good and joyous news. It inspires men to holy living and loving service in the fields white unto harvest.

When we think of the Law, some dangers threaten our ministries. There still is the danger of antinomianism which means "against law". This spirit of eliminating the Law was fostered by Agricola, a professor at Wittenberg, who wrote in 1525: "The decalog (Ten Commandments) belongs in the courthouse, not in the pulpit. All those who are occupied with Moses are bound to go to the devil. To the gallows with Moses." Luther immediately saw the implications of Agricola's position. He said, "By these spirits the devil does not intend to rob us of the Law, but of Christ, who fulfilled the Law."

A more serious abuse of the Law than antinomianism is the abuse of modern Pharisees. They don't eliminate it. They make a ladder out of the revealing mirror of God's law and scramble to climb each rung to parade their goodness before God in heaven. Goodness becomes the ticket for an eternal reward. Or, worse than that, modern Pharisees use the Law as a club to produce the fruits which can only flow out of faith in the crucified Redeemer. Legalistic pressure is used instead of evangelical persuasion. When this happens we have a responsibility to remind legalists the Law has a definite use as a mirror, curb, and rule for all sinners. But it is not to be used as a club! A club is usually a dead unproductive piece of wood. Jesus is a living Vine, and when we are attached to Him we bring forth the fruits of Christian character and holy obedience to His will. Having been bought with a price, no Pharisee will have to force us to glorify God. We spontaneously glorify our Savior in body and spirit.

A pastor once asked a catechumen how he was progressing in his homework for Catechism Class. Ill at ease, the boy answered, "I have gotten only as far as the words: 'who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature.'" Laying his hand on the boy's head the pastor said, "Your teacher hasn't gotten any farther than that either. God grant that you may never get any farther than that." The Law shows us that we are lost and condemned creatures; the Gospel that Christ has redeemed us. It naturally follows that we are "His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness."

In our church work we can avoid Pharisaism by letting the spirit of grace and mercy show through when inviting obedience to God's commandments and when contending for purity of doctrine. God's saving Truth must be defended, for all doctrinal erosion undermines the foundation of our faith. But when doctrinal discussions arise the spirit of determined love for the truth will light the way, rather than the spirit of intellectual pride and contentiousness. (Eph. 4: 14-16)

The same spirit of love helps us in preaching, teaching, and using God's Law. The thunderings of Sinai must be heard in this godless day and age, but when the balance in our ministries swings toward an emphasis on law instead of Gospel, then we can become legalistic Pharisees. Then we can easily slip into their practice of insisting on the letter of the Law and forgetting the spirit. Paul was so happy to be released from the spirit of legalism which regulated his life as a Pharisee that he wrote, "He (God) has enabled us to be ministers of a new covenant --not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." (II Cor. 3:6)

We mention only one more weapon to combat the modern fraternity. Since modern Pharisees, like their distant relatives, often act like floats in a parade, whose brakes fail as the parade goes downhill, it is important to stress the importance of internal devotion over against external, showy piety! The internal, or heart nature of our faith is mentioned frequently in Scripture. Jesus said to members of the fraternity, "The kingdom of God does not come visibly.....the kingdom of God is within you!" (Luke 17: 20-21)

Along Sweden's seacoast farmers tried for years to find some way to keep the swarms of seagulls from eating their crops. They went to the breeding grounds and destroyed the eggs during the laying season, but the gulls merely got busy and laid another batch when they returned from their foraging trip and found the nests empty. So the farmers devised a more effective method. They boiled the eggs and put them back into the nests where they found them. The gulls sat on them without knowing the difference until it was too late to lay another batch.

The enemy of our souls loves to destroy the germ of faith so that there are only externals that look like Christianity. In the process pastors and teachers can be tending nests full of duds. This feature of modern Pharisaism will not make dangerous inroads into our churches if we continue to remind our people of the importance of heart religion over against externalism. Jesus' words are plain, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24) "In truth!" Not pious external acts, but the real thing! The worship and activities, in our churches, will be the real thing when hearts are filled with faith, love, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!" (Rom. 14:17)

A prayer that is heard quite frequently in our circles is this one: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord." This prayer is from the nineteenth Psalm and we wonder how the old fraternity of Pharisees could have failed to notice it. This prayer weds internal sincerity and truth with external acts and makes a beautiful marriage. Where we have this combination in the lives of our people we have the praise of the lips united with the praise of the heart; church membership united with dedicated lives; confessional purity united with brotherly love, and the appearance of godliness united with actual godliness.

These, then, are some of the Scriptural weapons that we can use against the insidious errors of neo-Pharisaism which often prove to be so trying to our ministries. The battle is not won by running the flag of confessional purity up the pole and flying it at full mast, important as our Confessions may be to us. The precious Gospel alone secures our salvation through the blood of the Lamb. The Word of God alone outlines the great dangers of legalism, formalism, and traditionalism. In an excellent article entitled "J. P. Koehler's 'Gesetzlich Wesen Unter Uns'" (Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly - Winter 1976) pastor Lloyd Lemke outlines some of the very interesting history and background of this paper, and speaks of a road, which according to Koehler, can lead to legalism. In "Gesetzlich Wesen" (Faith Life, XXV, No. 9 - Sep. 1952) Prof. Koehler writes:

"Even though it is established that the Scriptures are the norma normans, the ruling standard, we actually make the confessional writings, or even the writings of fathers, the effective norm; and Scripture, dressed in its dicta probantia, the individual proof texts, must serve in the role of curtain boy, shifting the scenes and dimming the lights for the norma normata, the standard that is ruled, corrected, established."

Commenting on this Pastor Lemke writes the following in his brief study presented to the South Atlantic District, W.E.L.S., in April, 1976:

"What had happened is that in an effort to remain true to the Scriptures via the Lutheran Confessions and dogmaticians, the theologians were operating with an attitude in which the Scriptures fell into the background and an intellectual understanding of Christ's teaching came to the fore. The measure of one's theological rectitude was made on the basis of old doctrinal formulations rather than on fresh Bible study."

Oh how easy it is for any of us to follow the course of the Pharisees. We can recognize the importance of the Scriptures, and then go from them to the dogmatic formulations outlined by 16th century and more recent theologians, to intellectual pride in the correctness of our doctrinal stand, and to legalistic abuse. Our Wisconsin Synod heritage, dating back to the so called "Wauwatosa theology" and the paper written by one of our great theologians, mentioned before, calls for each of us to re-digest the saving truths of Scripture for ourselves, to live in the perimeters of that Word, and to avoid cold slavish obedience to the formulations of dogmaticians. This IN NO WAY IMPLIES that the Book of Concord, or recent positions of a confessional nature, are out of harmony with the inspired Truth. It is rather an appeal for more personal study of the sacred Scriptures so that our hearts may ever be filled with the joy of the Gospel and the glorious liberty of the sons of God.



"This man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

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Win Koelpin
Livonia, Michigan, 1980

THE APOCRYPHAL PERIOD:

FROM MALACHI TO JOHN THE BAPTIST.

BEFORE CHRIST.	EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITES.	BEFORE CHRIST.	CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS IN PERSIA, SYRIA AND EGYPT.		
			EGYPT.	BEFORE CHRIST.	SYRIA.
413	Joiada, Judas or Jehoiada high priest.	405	Artaxerxes Mnemon, Persia.		
373	Jonathan, John or Johanan high priest.	401	Death of Cyrus the younger.		
361	Ochus, King of Persia, plants Jews near the Caspian.	381	Artaxerxes Ochus, Persia.		
341	Jaddua high priest.	350	Egypt recovered by Persians.		
332	Alexander, having destroyed Tyre, visits Jerusalem; plants Jews in Alexandria.	335	Darius Codomanus, Persia.		
324	Alexander dies; his kingdom divided.	331	Alexander defeats Persia on the Granicus, 334; at Issus, 333; at Arbela, the Persian empire ends.		
321	Onias I. high priest.	324	Ptolemy Lagos, Egypt.		
320	Ptolemy Lagos captures Jerusalem; plants Jews in Alexandria and Cyrene.	312	Selencus I.; Nicator, Syria.		
312	Selencus obtains Syria; era of the Seleucids.	312	Empire of Selencus from Antioch to India.		
306	The dominions of Alexander formed into four kingdoms, as foretold by Daniel.	291	Selencus on the Tigris built.		
300	Simon the Just high priest.	285	Dionysius (Alex.) determines solar year.		
292	Eliazar high priest.				
285	Version of the LXX. commenced at Alexandria.				
250	Onias II. high priest.				
246	Ptolemy Euergetes offers sacrifices at Jerusalem.	255	P. Philadelph.	230	Antiochus I.
246	Ptolemy Philopator, prevented from entering the holy of holies, attempts to destroy the Jews in Alexandria, but is miraculously prevented.	247	P. Euergetes I.	201	Ant. II. Theos.
203	Antiochus the Great obtains Palestine.	222	P. Philopator.	246	Sol. II. Callinico.
200	The sect of the Sadducees founded.	205	P. Epiphanes.	220	Sol. III. Kernun.
199	Scopus, an Egyptian general, recovers Judea to the king of Egypt.	190	First Roman army in Asia.	223	Ant. III. the Great.
198	Antiochus regains Judea.			187	Sol. IV. Philop.
195	Onias III. high priest.				
176	Heliodorus, attempting to plunder the temple, is prevented by an angel.	181	P. Philometh.	175	Ant. IV. Epiph.
170	Antiochus Epiphanes takes Jerusalem, slays 40,000 persons and profanes the temple.			164	Ant. V. Eup.
167	Antiochus persecutes the Jews.			162	Demetr. Seler defeated and slain by.
165	Judas Maccabæus purifies the temple and institutes the feast of dedication.			150	Alexander Balas.
161	Judas Maccabæus slain; his brother Jonathan succeeds.				
149	Onias builds a temple in Egypt like that in Jerusalem.	146	P. Physcon.	146	Demetr. Nicator.
144	Jonathan, murdered by Tryphon, is succeeded by Simon his brother, who is made ruler by Demetrius.	144	P. Physcon.	144	Ant. VI. Theos.
143	The sovereignty and priesthood confirmed by the Jews to Simon and his posterity.			143	Tryphon.
136	Simon murdered; John Hyrcanus his son succeeds him.			139	Ant. VII.
135	The Pharisees.			130	Demetr. Nicator II.
130	John Hyrcanus throws off the Syrian yoke and makes himself independent. He destroys the temple on Mount Gerizim.			127	Alexander.
				123	Ant. VIII.
110	The Essenes.				
106	Aristobulus succeeds his father Hyrcanus and assumes the title of king.	116	P. Lathyrus.	111	Ant. IX.
105	Alexander Jannæus succeeds his brother Aristobulus and reigns for 27 years.			108	Ant. VIII. and IX.
78	Jannæus dies. Alexandra his wife succeeds and makes her son Hyrcanus high priest, and favors the Pharisees.	88	P. Alexander.	93	Philip and Ant. X.
69	Alexandra dies. Hyrcanus succeeds, but is forced to yield the crown to his younger brother, Aristobulus.	84	P. Auletes?	92	Demetrius Euc.
65	Pompey the Great reduces Syria to a Roman province. Hyrcanus endeavors to regain the crown.			83	Tigranes of Armenia.
63	Pompey, appealed to by Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, decides for the former; he takes Jerusalem and makes Judea tributary.	55	P. Auletes.	69	Ant. XI.
57	Aristobulus and his son Alexander, raising disturbances, are vanquished by Gabinius, the Roman governor of Syria.		Roman Governors.	65	Pompey makes it a Roman province.
54	Crassus plunders the temple.				
47	Antipater, being appointed by Julius Cæsar procurator of Judea, makes his son Herod governor of Galilee, and Phasael, of Jerusalem.	55	Gabinias.		Roman Governors.
44	Walls of Jerusalem rebuilt.				
43	Antipater poisoned; Herod and Phasael revenge his death.	51	Cleopatra.	51	Ribulus.
40	The Parthians, having taken Jerusalem, slay Phasael and place Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, upon the throne. Herod flies to Rome and is appointed king of Judea.			50	Q. M. Scipio.
37	Herod takes Jerusalem, beheads Antigonus and is established as king of Judea; reigns 34 years.			47	S. Cæsar.
36	Herod makes Aristobulus, brother of his wife Mariamne, high priest, but afterwards murders him.			43	Cassius.
25	Herod rebuilds Samaria and calls it Sebaste.	30	Made a Roman province by Octavianus.	38	Ventidius.
22	Herod begins to build Cesarea. Trachonitis, Auranitis and Batanea are added to his dominions.			39	Parthians invade Syria, 50; and are fiercely expelled by Vent.
17	Herod, after two years' preparation, begins to rebuild and enlarge the temple.			31	Plautus.
6	Zacharias receives the announcement respecting the birth of John the Baptist. The Canon of the New Testament begins.			27	Messala C.
				22	Agrippa.
				13	S. Saturninus and T. Volumnius.

Chronological Index — Inter-Testamental Period

413 B.C. to birth of Christ

Year of the World.	Before Christ.		Year of the World.	Before Christ.	
3525	479	Darius having for the last sixteen years of his life carried on an unsuccessful war with the Greeks, Xerxes his son, after four years' preparation, invades their country with an army of some millions; but he and his Carthaginian allies are shamefully repulsed, Da. 11. 2; 10. 20; 7. 5; 8. 4.	3834	170	In his return from his second expedition into Egypt he takes Jerusalem, murders 40,000, and takes as many more prisoners to be sold for slaves.
3540	464	Artaxerxes Longimanus succeeds his father Xerxes. The Egyptians again revolt, but are reduced.	3836	168	In his return from his fourth expedition, when he was checked by the peremptory demands of the Roman ambassadors, he stops the daily sacrifice, and attempts to abolish the Jewish worship.
3547	457	Ezra is sent to Jerusalem by Artaxerxes as his deputy-governor of Judea. With great zeal he separates the Jews from their strange wives, Ezr. vii. -x. Perhaps it was now that Esther was married to Ahasuerus, and Haman's plot and ruin five years after, Es. i. -x.; and, by her influence, Artaxerxes greatly favoured the Jews.	3840	164	After some years' struggling, Judas Maccabeus defeats Antiochus' army at Jerusalem, restores the worship of God in the temple, and institutes the <i>feast of dedication</i> . Not long after this Antiochus dies miserably, Da. 11. 21-35; 8. 23-25; Zec. 1. 20, 21; 9. 13-17; 12. 2-7; Ju. 10. 22.
3559	445	Nehemiah is appointed deputy-governor of Judea, and rebuilds Jerusalem. Con-			For thirty years after, Judas and his brethren Jonathan and Simeon protect their nation; governing their church as high priests, and their state as civil rulers dependent on the Syro-Grecians.
		tinuing in that office eighteen, or perhaps thirty-six years, he labours to reform his nation, No. 1. -xiii.; Da. 9. 26.	3870	134	After this John Hircanus the son of Simon, and Alexander Jannæus his son, having rendered the Jewish nation independent, reign prosperously for about fifty years, and subdue the Samaritans, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, and Philistines, Is. 11. 14; Mi. 4. 12, 13; Ob. 18-21.
3574	430	Malachi the prophet reproves the Jews for their contempt of God's ordinances, sacrilege, marriages with heathens, and cruelty to their Jewish wives, Mal. i. -iv.	3926	78	After a war of six years with his subjects, Alexander dies. Alexandra his widow wisely governs the state nine years, Hircanus her son being high-priest.
3591	413	The Egyptians revolt from Darius Nothus, king of Persia. It required sixty-four years to reduce them, Is. xix.; Eze. xxix. xxx.; Zec. 10. 11; Joel 3. 19; Is. 27. 1.	3940	64	After five years' contention between Hircanus, her elder but peaceable son, and Aristobulus the younger, they both apply to the Romans for help.
3596	408	Scarcely had Nehemiah finished his reformation when Manassch, the son-in-law of Sanballat, began to build the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizzim, No. 13. 28, 29; Ju. 4. 20.			Pompey the Roman general takes part with Hircanus; and taking Jerusalem from Aristobulus, carries him prisoner to Rome, where he is poisoned about fourteen years after.
3655	349	After reducing the revolted Cyprians and Phœnicians, and ravaging part of Judea, Artaxerxes Ochus, king of Persia, finally reduces the Egyptians; since which they have never been governed by a prince of their own, Eze. 29. 14, 15; 30. 13; Zec. 10. 11; Is. xix.	3941	63	Antipater, who had been a partisan of Hircanus, obtains for his son Phasael the government of Judea, and for Herod the Great the government of Galilee.
3670	334	After the Persians and Greeks had been generally in a state of war for 160 years, Alexander the Great marches 35,000 Greeks into Asia, with whom in six years he conquers the whole Persian empire, Da. vi. vii.; 8. 5-7; 10. 20; 11. 3; Zec. 6. 6.	3960	44	Julius Cæsar, who, after great success in war, had altered the republican form of the Roman government, and made himself emperor, is slain by Brutus, Cæsius, and others, in the senate-house.
3672	332	Alexander furiously destroys Tyre and Philistia. The Jews and Egyptians submit to him, Is. 23. 1-18; Zec. 9. 1-8.	3964	40	Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus, having been made king of Judæa by the Parthians; Herod of Galilee, by the assistance of the Romans, wrecks the kingdom from him.
3681	323	Alexander dies. Within fifteen years after his whole family is murdered, and his empire divided among four of his principal generals, Da. 7. 6; 8. 3; 11. 4. The two principal divisions were the kingdom or empire of Egypt on the south of Cænaan, and of Syria on the north. For more than 150 years these were generally in a state of war one with another; nevertheless the Jews, whose country lay betwixt them, were marvellously protected by Providence, Da. 11. 5-29; Zec. 10. 8.	3982	18	Herod having offended the Jews by some heathenish structures in compliment to Augustus the Roman emperor, attempts to regain their favour by rebuilding their ruinous temple.
3829	175	Antiochus Epiphanes succeeding his brother Seleucus, persecutes the Jews, and sets to	4000		After a solemn annunciation of their birth by the angel Gabriel, John Baptist and Christ are born, to the great joy of their parents.