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THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE SADDUCEES.

BY

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LITERATURE.

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Bible,- Especially the Gospels and Acts with Ezra and Neh.

Josephus,- Antiquities, XIII,V,9; XIII, x,6; x,6; XVIII,
I,4; xx,IX,I; XIII,x,6; XVIII,I
3f.;

Wars, - I,V,2; II,VIII,I4.

Vita, - I; 39.

Apocrypha,- I and II Maccabees.

Shurer, and Hastings Bible Dictionary.

Edersheim,- The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.
History of the Jewish Nation.

Bruce,- Kingdom of God. 187 ff.

Ewald,- History of the People of Israel. Vol. V. p.366f.

Wellhausen,- The Pharisees and The Sadducees.

The Origin and Growth of the Sadducees.

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It is with a strange interest that one stands by a spring or brooklet when he knows that it is the source of a mighty river - a Mississippi, a Nile, or an Amazon; but the student of history has a greater joy when he stands at the beginning of a movement that has shaped thought and life for centuries. As we notice the prominent part played by the religious sects during the time of our Lord we are stirred to questions as to their origin, their growth, their doctrines and beliefs. And so closely are they related that the history of one involves that of the other.

After a thorough study our minds naturally pause first between the years B.C. 135 - 105. For it was during the outwardly bright and prosperous reign of John Hyrcanus that an internal discord occurred which formulated the long smouldering tendencies. It was at this time that the sects of the Sadducees and Pharisees first took definite shape as political and religious parties. Tracing the development of these sects prior to the latter half of the second century B.C. the student soon loses the distinguishing characteristics in a maze of doubt.

The origin of the name of the sect, Sadducee, is in obscurity. The best authorities seem to think that it was derived from Zadok, who was high-priest in Jerusalem in the days of Solomon and David. Yet this is not thoroughly established; but Ezekiel (Ez. 48, 17.) admits only the sons of "Zaddouk" to the right of officiating as priests in the new temple at Jerusalem. Also the consistency with which the sect agrees in behavior with what we know of the sons of Zadok causes this to be accepted as the most probable derivation.

To trace the early tendencies to the Sadduceeism of the times of Christ we must go back as early as B.C. 537 when Cyrus king of Persia, issued an order that "The Lord God of heaven ----- hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah" (Ezra I, 2.) He also ordered all Jews to go up to Jerusalem to build the house. This decree effected all the gold and silver as well as the people that had been taken

captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. In Ezra 2 these are enumerated. Upon the return of these Jewish captives they watched with great care that none but the unpolluted should be admitted into leadership. Ezra, in chapter two, verse 62 speaks of some who "Sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood". Thus the Jew's jealous care for the untainted purity of his religion, made him scrupulous and vigilant at this crucial epoch admitting only those of pure stock. But those who had been in Jerusalem had been influenced by foreign elements with which they had been brought in contact and the distinct features of division became less marked and the people less strict and white corpuscles begun to flow with the red ~~of~~ in Jewish veins. When Ezra returned from Babylon ~~in~~ 458 B.C. he found a division among the Jews in regard to intercourse with foreigners. And so greatly was he disturbed by their affinity with strangers that he "rent his garment and mantle and tore his hair" and lamented in prayers. (Ezra 9,3.). And well, it was for this devout Jew to lament for, as he perceived, a grave crisis had come in the history of the Jewish community in Palestine; the holy race was being profaned at its very capitol. Fearing this element might eventually domineer he gave strenuous orders to put away foreign wives and children and all who were not of pure Jewish blood should not belong to the community. (Ezra 9,2 10,1-5.). But his threat was not thoroughly carried out for in B.C. 144 Nehemiah in Neh. 6,17, speaks of secret intelligences between the enemies and the nobles of Judah; and intermarriages continued. Like Ezra he gave strict orders to return to former purity. Revisiting Jerusalem some time after he found his orders also disobeyed and that the high-priest himself was to be numbered among the rest. Driven by a firm determination he took active measures to reinstate the Jewish ideal Sabbath, to purify the temples and to compel future obedience. Backed ~~up~~ by the Persian king Nehemiah was enabled to make the division between the pious and the impious Jews distinct. Notwithstanding this the seed had been sown and there remained an Israel after the flesh and an Israel after the spirit.

The latter half of the Persian period is without hardly any authentic information on the point in question. But this was followed by another period which was destined to greatly effect it. But before leaving the period ~~of~~ ~~Ezra~~ we must not suppose that wicked people alone opposed the rigorism

of Ezra and Nehemiah. Indeed Cheyne in his "Jewish Religious Life after the Exile" makes the Book of Ruth a story justifying the admission into the community of any foreign women who heartily adopted the nationality and religion of their Jewish husbands. Whether we accept his theory or not the fact of the book still remains that Ruth was of foreign blood.

We now face a future of changes. Alexander the Great conquered Persia and the Jews were thus brought into close contact with a new life and civilization - the Grecian. We can soon note the influence of this people on their secular and religious life. Some, however, of the succeeding rulers were respectful for the Jewish religion and granted it privileges. Josephus, of whom Ewald speaks slightly saying he is in his views "abrupt, arbitrary, and devoid of knowledge", yet of whom we can read with profit if we bear in mind his personal views; relates that Antiochus III favored the Jews because of their kindness to him, published a decree that it was "unlawful for a foreigner to come within the limits of the temple" and various other rules the transgressor of which should pay "3000 drachmae of silver". But when Antiochus Epiphanes ascended the throne of Syria in B.C. 175 affairs changed. He began to attempt to Hellenize the Jews by force. He made Grecian sports to be practiced quite close to the temple. Orders were given and soldiers placed in the Acra overlooking the temple to see that Jewish rites ceased and heathen customs followed under pain of death. Every village in Palestine was required to set up its heathen altar and imperial officers were tolled off to see that heathen sacrifices were duly offered by all the citizens. Women with the babes they had circumcized were hurled headlong from the city wall. But these extreme measures of Antiochus alienated many from even among the Greek sympathizers and evoked an earnest religious patriotism. But our common attention is turned to a little country town between Joppa and Jerusalem. In this town - Modin - an aged priest had taken refuge. When asked to sacrifice on the heathen altar he refused and when a base Jew was about to do the unholy deed Mattathias slew both him and the king's commissioner. Calling the faithful Jews about him he sought to defend their faith. Thus began the heroic struggle of the Maccabee brothers who fought valiantly for God's cause and their country's good. In their struggle for national independence they were compelled to enter into alliances with the Gentile world and to act in accordance with the dictates of worldly prudence.

Brought thus into such close contact with the foreign world the very thing for which they fought was propagated in the fighting. The result was the establishment of a thoroughly secular state, the civil ruler being at once the high-priest. Many, too, adhered to these hellenistic influences that they might be brought from the narrowness of their fathers and be freely permitted to participate in the Greek culture and the joys of Greek life. Others warmly opposed it. These orthodox and pious classes were the immediate progenitors of the Sadducee and Pharisee parties, having been openly opposed since the time of Hyrcanus.

After the loss of national independence the opposition between these parties lost its political nature and became more and more distinctively religious. When Rome assumed control she left internal matters largely in the hands of the Sanhedrin under the oversight of the high-priest who belonged to the Sadduceean party. The reformation so heartily desired by Ezra and Nehemiah was a secondary matter to these who were more concerned for their own privileges. Of course some of the priests were doubtless thoroughly conscious to the sacredness of their position yet this was the exception. Wellhausen says "The high-priests regarded their sacred office only as a pedestal of worldly power", "They claimed nothing from God, nor he from them". We find it true that some of the chief-priestly families were, near the close of the Grecian period entirely secularized. Hence we can appreciate the laxity and the strictness in religion and government in the time of Jesus and Paul. Basing our evidence at this time and a little later we may study the religious differences existing between them, paying attention to the sect before us, the Sadducee. And in the consideration of these we must bear ~~in~~ in mind that we know the Sadducees from the reports of their avowed enemies alone. In speaking of this sect, Ewald remarks that "It was a school of freedom of life, of thought, and of action; but it was a freedom that sprang out of the Greek age, with its deep moral degradation, which corresponded with it and was acceptable to it".

According to Josephus, the Sadducees take away fate and say there is no such thing. (Ant. xiii, v, 9.). They are opposed to the Pharisees because the Pharisees add much to what is not in the law of Moses. (Ant. x, 6.). Resurrection of the body is denied. The soul dies with man. (Ant. xiii, i, 4). They believed in absolute free-will. (Wars, ii, viii, 14).

Josephus indicates that the Sadducees avoid public office, that if they hold public office they must become Pharisees as their doctrine cannot hold the people. That the Pharisees are kind to one another while the Sadducee is barbarous one toward another. But prejudice here is manifest. Edersheim in summing up the differences between these parties says that when properly understood the differences amount to this, - "the Pharisees accentuated God's preordination, the Sadducees man's free-will; the former admitted only a partial influence of the human element on what happened, or the co-operation of the human with the Divine, the latter denied all absolute preordination, and man's choice of evil or good, with its consequences of misery or happiness, to depend entirely on the exercise of free-will and self-determination".

The Essenes, of whom Josephus gives extended description in Wars, ii, viii, differed from the Sadducees in that they were severe in discipline, rejected pleasure, and were eminent for fidelity. Their piety was of a high type. They believed in the immortality of the soul. In all Josephus gives a glowing account of them to their credit.

But we may become better acquainted with the ideas ~~etc~~ of the Sadducees by Christ's attitude toward them. They came into direct collision with Christ more slowly than their opponents - they invited and received fewer of his rebukes. He offended them but because of their little influence with the people ~~in~~ religious matters he referred to them less. He offended them more upon the score of taste and custom than upon that of precept and principle. They would have gladly joined him had he not been so impracticable in his opposition to the Pharisees. But they looked upon him as a plebeian - a workingman with social theories that slighted and perhaps menaced their precedence. It was against the leaven of these two sects that Christ gave warning to his followers, - against the rigorism of the one and the laxity of the other; he rebuked one for its disuse of the Scripture the other for its abuse of it; one for saying too much the other for saying too little; both for the neglect of real devotion to the real God. His chief denunciation seems to have been against the secular spirit of the Sadducees. (Mtt. 6, 6-II.). But Christ stirred their active antagonism by driving the money changers out of the temple and by his acceptance of the title "son of David" In wrath they forgot party strife in a common object - the death of our Lord.

Licence and stringency swallowed their differences and became allies - the extremes met in discarding the truth-teller who frustrated both their tokens.

Thus we see the Sadducee a satellite of the Sanhedrin and with the Sanhedrin they were to live or die. As that body could not remain the doom of the sect was also sealed; for with the destruction of Jerusalem the Sanhedrin and the high-priesthood vanished and the Sadducee as a party disappeared from history.

But names are accidental and changable - nature's remain. And these two parties illustrate two great phases of fatal error which are, alas! permanent. They are ancient - they are also modern. They are opposite but they are correlative. One falsifies man's relation to God, the other man's relation to man. The Pharisee stands evermore for pride of religious privilege - thankful that he is not as other men; for a wisdom above that which is written, which ostracizes all that differs from its own theory; it stands for all special forms of exactness - liturgies, ceremonies, days. Whatever puts symbol for the essence, sacrament for the grace, the term for the thing, the church for Christ is ancient Phariseism modernized. Christ calls to love, service, obedience, sacrifice, sympathy, actual salvation is not obsolete. The Sadducee stands for ancestry, office, social rank, title, comfort - all that separates man in any fancied superiority to his fellows. He is the one who lives to self, the presuming aristocrat, the man cold of reason and heart.

But Christ has come! to summon the tears of penitence and to wipe them away; to interpret holiness by pity; to touch the springs of life; to change lip-service and eye-service to hand-service and heart-service.

The teachings of Jesus are fast becoming man's universal standard of life. The requiem of the early Christian era is swelling into the morning song of a greater age. The death of the Sadducee as a party is prophetic of a future when its spirit shall ~~be~~ be blotted from the earth. The prayer of the Christians of the first century "thy kingdom come" is the prayer of the Christians of the twentieth century. Together with them we look into the future with hopeful hearts to the time when the "fullness of the Gentiles is come in" and the travail of the ages has come, when shall come the end of religions "in the birth of religions". Then there shall be neither Jew nor Greek, Sadducee nor Pharisee but both shall be swallowed up in a mighty fellowship in Christ, for "Christ is

all and in all".