

I. THE FREEDOM OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

The Synagogue,—that most gracious product of Jewish legalism—cannot have been the invention of the Hellenistic diaspora (as is maintained, without adequate evidence, by M. Friedländer, *Introd. to Synagoge und Kirche*, 1908). If it was due to a diaspora at all, it must be attributed to the exile in Babylon. This is no modern guess, for we have the statement of Justin (*Dialogue with Trypho* 17) that Jews applied Malachi i. 11, 12 to the prayers of the Israelites *then* in dispersion. We may confidently assert (with W. Bacher, *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v.; G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem* i. 364) that the Synagogue was a Palestinian institution of the Persian period. It was an institution momentous for the history of religion. “Their (the Jews’) genius for the organisation of public religion appears in the fact that the form of communal worship devised by them was adopted by Christianity and Islam, and in its general outline still exists in the Christian and Moslem worlds” (C. Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions*, 1913, p. 546).

In the Greek diaspora the Synagogue undoubtedly became of special importance. But its connection with Palestinian models is clear. Philo’s account of the services in the Greek synagogues points to the two features which distinguished the Palestinian system; the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures, and the recitation of passages to which the assembly responded by terms of liturgical assent (cf. *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, 1909, p. 190). These features are shown in Ezra and Chronicles, and in all the Palestinian records that have come down to us (as in Sirach). True, the Maccabean history makes no direct reference to the Synagogue, but the main interest in that history was Jerusalem and the Temple. None the less, the books of the Maccabees prove most clearly that the people were in possession of copies of the Scroll of the law from which they read publicly (1 Macc. i. 57, iii. 48), were in the habit of gathering

for prayer (iii. 44), and above all of singing hymns with such refrains as “His mercy is good, and endureth for ever” (iv. 24).

That there is little allusion in the Books of the Maccabees to places of worship is intelligible—though the silence is not absolute. It must not be overlooked that (iii. 46) Mizpah is described not as an ancient shrine or altar but as “a place of prayer” (τόπος προσευχῆς). But the fact seems to be that the institution of the Synagogue was earlier than the erection of places of worship. In the Temple itself, the reading of the Law was conducted by Ezra in the open courts, which remained the scene of the prayer-meetings to the end, as the Rabbinic sources amply demonstrate (e.g. Mishnah Sukkah chs. iv—v; cf. Sirach l. 5—21; 1 Macc. iv. 55). So, too, with the first prayer-meetings in the “provinces.” The meetings were probably held in the open air; and that this was the most primitive form is shown by the fact that the assemblies on occasions of national stress, even in the last decades of the existence of the temple, were held in the public thoroughfares (Mishnah Taanith ii. 1). By the first century A.D. Synagogue buildings were plentiful both in the capital and the provinces. They probably came into being under the favourable rule of Simon. It must always, however, be remembered that Synagogue buildings in various parts of Palestine are possibly referred to in Psalm lxxiv. 8, usually assigned to the early years of the Maccabean age.

This is not the place to discuss the whole question, but one supreme fact must not be omitted. From first to last, there was an organic relation between Temple and Synagogue (though Friedländer, *loc. cit.*, denies this). That there were prayers in the Temple is of course certain (Mishnah Tamid v; Philo on Monarchy vi). Isaiah’s phrase (lvi. 7) a “house of prayer” (LXX. οἶκος προσευχῆς) applied to the Temple was fulfilled to the letter. It is probable that *all* the Greek words used in the diaspora for the Synagogue (that word itself, *Proseuche* and place of instruction,—the last occurs in the Hebrew Sirach) were derived from Hebrew or Aramaic equivalents. Certain is it that, in Palestine, no Greek terms were imported to describe the Synagogue. The real model for Palestine and the diaspora was the Temple. It was a true instinct, therefore, which identified the “smaller sanctuary” of Ezekiel xi. 16 with the Synagogue (T. B. Megillah 29 b). The very word *Abodah* used of the Temple *service* became an epithet for the service of prayer (the “Abodah of the heart,” Sifrê Deut. § 41). The link between Temple and Synagogue was established in Palestine by the system in accordance with which local delegacies accompanied

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the priests during their course of service in Jerusalem, while at home there were simultaneously held public readings of the law (Mishnah Taanith iv. 2).

The evidence from the Greek sources points in the same direction. Agatharchides of Cnidos (second century B.C.) records how the Jews spend their Sabbath in rest, and “spread out their hands and *pray* (εὐχέσθαι) till the evening.” The whole context of the passage (as cited in Josephus *Against Apion* I. 22) shows that Agatharchides was referring to Jerusalem. That, however, in Egypt the Synagogue imitated the Palestinian methods is clear from Philo. Even Philo’s Egyptian Therapeutae have their analogue, and possibly exemplar, in the Palestinian Essenes. As regards Alexandria, Philo gives unmistakable proof of the dependence of the Synagogue on the Temple method. His account, though its force has not been adequately realized, entirely depends on the Palestinian model. He tells us how (II. 630) “the multitude listens in silence, except when it is customary to say words of good omen by way of assent to what is read.” This can only refer to the recitation of passages (chiefly no doubt Psalms) by one while the rest answer by “Amen” and similar ancient liturgical responses, such as were used in the Temple. That this must refer to prayers and not to reading the law is certain, for Philo then *proceeds* to describe the Scriptural readings and the expositions. Very instructive as to the connection between the Synagogues of the diaspora and the Temple is Philo’s further statement that the exposition of the Scriptures was delivered by *one of the priests who happened to be present* (τῶν ἱερῶν δέ τις ὁ παρὼν) or by one of the elders (ἑ τῶν γερόντων).

This picture of the activity of the priests in teaching the law is a remarkable testimony to the truth that though the Temple was essentially the home of the sacrificial ritual, its influence on life was far-reaching and beneficial. Had it been otherwise, Philo would not have eulogised the Temple and priesthood—as he does in many places. Perhaps nothing could more piquantly show how completely Jerusalem, its Temple and its services, contrived to harmonise sacrificial ritual with prayer and a manifold activity, than the quaint report given by one who lived in Jerusalem during the existence of the Temple and survived its fall. R. Joshua b. Ḥananya said: “When we rejoiced (during Tabernacles) at the Joy of the Water-drawing we saw no sleep with our eyes. How so? The first hour, the morning Tamid (sacrifice), and thence to the prayer; thence to the musaph (additional) offering, thence to the musaph prayer; thence to the House of Study, thence to

the meal; thence to the afternoon prayer, thence to the evening Tamid; thence onwards to the joy of the water-drawing" (T. B. Sukkah 53 a).

The Synoptists draw a pleasing picture of the freedom of teaching permitted by the Synagogue. Jesus performed this function throughout Galilee. The Fourth Gospel and Acts confirm the Synoptic record as to the readiness of the "rulers of the Synagogue" to call upon any competent worshipper to interpret and expound the Scriptures that had been read. Such instruction was usual in the Synagogue long before the time of Jesus as Zunz has shown (*Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, ch. xx.), and the evidence is admirably marshalled and supplemented by Schürer (*Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes* etc. II⁴. pp. 498 seq.). Philo (II. 458) describes how one would read from the book, while another, "one of the more experienced" (τῶν ἐμπειροτέρων), expounded. In Palestine, too, the only qualification was competence, just as for leading the services experience (cf. the רניל of the Mishnah Taanith ii. 2) was a chief requisite. As the discourses grew in length the *locale* for the sermon seems to have been transferred from Synagogue to School, and the *time* sometimes changed from the morning to the afternoon or previous evening. We find later on both customs in force together (T.J. *Taanith*, i. § 2 etc.). But at the earlier period, when the discourse was brief, it must have been spoken in the Synagogue, and immediately after the lesson from the Prophets.

The only two occasions of which we have a definite account of teaching in the Synagogue are, curiously enough, treated by Schürer (II⁴. 533 n. 123) as exceptions. His reason for doing so is derived from a purely philological argument. In the two cases, Luke iv. 17 and Acts xiii. 15, it is specifically recorded that the address followed the reading from the Prophets. In the first instance Jesus speaks after reading a couple of verses from Isaiah; in the second, we are explicitly told that in the Synagogue of Antioch, after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the Synagogue sent to them [Paul and his company], saying, "Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." We may note in passing that whereas Jesus both reads the lesson and expounds it, Paul does not seem to have read the lesson. This indicates an interesting difference in practice, for which there is other evidence. Rapoport (*Erech Millin*, 168) concludes from various Rabbinical passages that in the second century the reader of the Prophetic lesson was, in general, one who was able also to preach.

It may be that this custom existed side by side with another method which encouraged the *children* to read the lessons in Synagogue (cf.

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Blau, *Revue des Etudes juives*, LV. 218). The two customs can be reconciled by the supposition (based on *Soferim*, xii. 7, xiv. 2) that when a preacher was present, he read the Prophetical lesson, and in the absence of such a one the children read it, perhaps at greater length. For the Prophetical reading was by nature a sermon, and as the service concluded with a sermon, the Prophetical lesson concluded the service when no preacher was present. It is clear from the narrative in T.B. *Beza*, 15 b, that the homily of the Rabbi was the end of the service, and it follows that the homily was given after the reading from the Prophets. But Schürer holds that as a general rule the discourse followed on the Pentateuchal lesson, and that the Prophetical reading without explanation concluded the service. True it is that the Prophetical lesson was named *haftara* (הַפְּטָרָה or הַפְּטָרָה), a word corresponding to *demissio*, i.e. the people was dismissed with or after the reading from the Prophets. But this surely is quite compatible with a short discourse, and the dismissal of the people might still be described as following the Prophetical lesson. Moreover, it may well be that the term *haftara* refers to the conclusion not of the whole services but of the Scriptural readings, the Prophetical passage being the *complement* of the Pentateuchal section. This was the view of various medieval authorities as cited in Abudarham and other liturgists. (It is accepted by I. Elbogen in his treatise *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Leipzig, 1913, p. 175).

The oldest Prophetical lessons were most probably introduced for festivals and the special four or five Sabbaths in order to reinforce and interpret the Pentateuchal lessons, and (in the view of some) to oppose the views of schismatics. The Pharisees, owing to the conflicting theories of the Sadducees, attached to the sections from the Law such readings from the other Scriptures (particularly the "Earlier Prophets" who offered historical statements) as supported the Pharisaic exposition of the festival laws. (Cf. Büchler, *J. E.*, vi. 136 a. The same writer there cites T.B. *Megilla*, 25 b, T.J. *Megilla*, iv. 75 c, *Tosefta*, iv. 34 as Talmudic evidence that the reading of the *haftara* on the Sabbath had already been instituted in the first century of the common era). According to Abudarham, the author of a famous fourteenth century commentary on the Synagogue liturgy, the Prophetic readings grew up in a time of persecution, and were a substitute for the Pentateuchal readings when these were interdicted. On the other hand, L. Venetianer has lately suggested (*Z. D. M. G.* vol. 63, p. 103) that there were no specific readings from the Prophets till the end of

the second century, and that the Prophetical lectionaries were chosen polemically in reply to lectionaries and homilies in the early Christian Church. But it seems far more probable that the haftaras were chosen for other reasons: (a) to include some of the most beautiful parts of the Scriptures, (b) to reinforce the message of the Pentateuch, and (c) to establish firmly the conviction that the whole of the canonical Scriptures (which, when the haftaras were first appointed, did not yet include the hagiographa) were a *unity*. (Cf. Bacher, *Die Proömien der alten jüdischen Homilie*, 1913, Introduction.)

There does not seem to have been any interval between the two readings, in fact the reciter of the haftara previously read a few verses from the Pentateuchal lesson (T.B. *Megilla*, 23 a). The sermon often dealt with the substance of the Pentateuchal lesson, and the preacher frequently took his text from it. But it is initially unlikely that the sermon should precede the haftara, seeing that the latter was introduced to help the understanding of the Law. We are not, however, left to conjecture. For we possess a large number of discourses which were specifically composed round the haftara. Many of the homilies in the *Pesiqta Rabbathi* are of this class; they are of course not, as they now stand, so early as the first century, but they represent a custom so well established as to point to antiquity of origin. The famous fast-day discourse reported in the Mishnah Taanith ii. 1 is based on two texts from the prophets (Jonah iii. 10 and Joel ii. 13),—both of which passages were eminently suitable as the lesson for such an occasion. Of the forty-seven chapters in the *Pesiqta* (most of which are compounded of many discourses) in Friedmann's edition, more than twenty are based on haftaras; in the *Pesiqta of R. Cahana* there are eleven such chapters. That these discourses followed the reading from the Prophets is shown by the recurrence of such a phrase as: "As he has read as *haftara* in the Prophet" (מה שהשלים בנביא) (Friedmann, 1 b) when quoting the text expounded. (The verb שלם is equivalent in this context to אפטר, just as שלמתא is another word for הפטרה, and it must signify to *complete* the lesson rather than to *dismiss* the congregation.) Similar evidence that the discourse was preceded by the actual reading of the *haftara* is derivable from Friedmann's edition, pp. 29 a, 42 a (ממה שהשלים הנביא), 54 a, 142 b (ממה שכתב בעניין) "As he has written in the passage read", 149 b (ממה שקראו בעניין הנביא), 179 a (ממה שקרינו בעניין). Perhaps the most instructive passage of all is on 172 a. Here the discourse is on the Pentateuchal text Leviticus xxiii. 24 read on the New Year

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festival: "In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets." At the end of the last *Pisqa* the homily runs: "Says the Holy One, blessed be He, in this world, through the trumpet (*shofar*) I have had compassion on you, and so in time to come I will be merciful to you through the trumpet (*shofar*) and bring near your redemption. Whence? From what we have read in the lesson of the Prophet (מניין? ממה שקראו בעניין בנביא): Blow ye the trumpet in Zion...for the day of the Lord cometh (Joel ii. 1)." In this case it is quite clear that the discourse on the Pentateuchal text *followed* the *haftara*.

I have been at some pains to show that the New Testament accounts of the preaching in the Synagogues refer to the normal and not to the exceptional, because these accounts are the most precise we possess and it is important to know that we may rely on them completely. What then can we exactly infer as to the extent of freedom which the worshippers enjoyed not only with regard to teaching but also with regard to the selection of passages on which to speak? I do not find it possible to accept the view that the homilist was allowed a *perfectly* free hand, that he might open the Prophet or Prophets where he willed, read a verse or two and then address the congregation. That the readings from the Law and the Prophets were in the time of Jesus very short is fairly certain. The rule that at least 21 verses were read from the Law and the Prophets was, as Büchler shows (*J. Q. R.*, v. 464 seq.; vi. 14 seq., 45), late. In the Massoretic divisions we find Sabbath lessons (*Sedarim*) which contain seven, eight and nine verses, and there are many indications that the oldest *haftara* often comprised very few verses. This follows indeed from the very nature of the *haftara*. It originally corresponded in substance with, and agreed often in its opening word with the opening word of, the Pentateuchal lesson. But this correspondence mostly only concerns a single verse or two, not long passages. Thus the reading Isaiah lxi. 1—2 (Luke iv. 16) was possibly the whole of the *haftara*. Later on, it became usual to round off the reading by *skipping* until a suitable terminating verse was reached.

Let us try to define exactly what it is that Luke describes. Jesus stood up to read. Then "there was delivered unto him a book of the prophet Isaiah." The verb used for "delivered up" (*ἐπεδόθη*) might be interpreted "was delivered unto him in addition." In that case Jesus would have first read a verse of the Pentateuchal lesson (perhaps Deut. xv. 7) and then proceeded with the *haftara*. But it is impossible

to press the Greek verb in this way. Yet it is at all events clear that the *prophet* was not Jesus' choice; it was handed to him. Moreover, the wording in Luke makes it almost certain that just as the book of Isaiah was not Jesus' own choice, so the passage from Isaiah was not chosen by Jesus himself. "He opened the book and found the place where it was written." The word "found" (εὑρεν) does not mean he looked for it and chose it, but he "found" it ready. This is implied by a change in the verbs which has I think been overlooked. We are simply told that Jesus "opened" (ἀνοίξας) the book. Jesus does not unroll it, as he would have done had he searched for a text. (The reading ἀναπτύξας is rejected by W.H., Nestle etc.) Luke on the other hand tells us that when he had finished the reading he "rolled it up." The A.V. "he closed the book" does not give the force of the Greek (πτύξας). Thus when he has finished Jesus rolls up the scroll which he did not unroll, for it was given to him already unrolled, so that he only opened it at the place already selected and found the passage in Isaiah ready for him to read. In fact, while the Pentateuch was read in an unbroken order, the *haftara* might be derived from any part of the Prophets, provided always that one condition was fulfilled: the passage was bound to resemble in subject-matter the Torah portion just read. As Dr Büchler well puts it: "This is clear from the origin of the institution itself; and moreover the examples quoted by the Mishna, Boraitha and Tosefta, bear unmistakable testimony to the existence of this condition" (*J. Q. R.*, VI. 12).

It has often been pointed out that Jesus sat down (Luke iv. 20) to expound the Scriptures, and that this accords with Rabbinic custom. There is no contradiction in Acts xiii. 16, where "Paul stood up." Though Paul's exhortation follows Jewish lines in its structure, it is not an explanation of the Law. For, though the address may be due more to Luke's hand than to Paul's, it resembles the exhortations in the Books of the Maccabees; and, at all events, so far from expounding the Law, it is an ingenious eulogy of it up to a point, and thence an argument against its sufficiency. The climax of Paul's whole speech is reached in verse 39, and the opposition which followed, from those who venerated the Law against one who proclaimed its insufficiency, cannot be regarded as any breach in that freedom of the Synagogue which he had previously enjoyed. On the other hand, Jesus expounded the Scriptures, applying Isaiah lxi. 1, 2 to himself. He seems to have combined lviii. 6 with lxi. 1. The right to "skip" while reading the

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Prophets was well attested (Mishnah *Megilla* iv. 4). Being written on a Scroll, the two passages might easily be open together, and Jesus, in accordance with what at all events became a usual Rabbinic device, intended to use both texts as the key to his exposition. Such skipping to suitable passages may be noted in the Geniza fragments of haftaras in the triennial cycle.

If the view here taken of the incident in Luke be correct, then we have distinctly gained evidence that, at the opening of the public teaching of Jesus, the Synagogue lectionary was becoming fixed at all events in its main principles. That this was the case with the essential elements of the service is very probable. There is no reason whatever to doubt the tradition (T.B. *Berachoth*, 33 a) which ascribed the beginnings of the order of service to the "Men of the Great Synod," the successors of the three post-exilic prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The doubts which Kuenen threw on the reality of this body—doubts which for a generation caused the "Great Synod" to be dismissed as a myth—are no longer generally shared, and Dr G. Adam Smith in his *Jerusalem* has fairly faced the absurd position in which we are placed if we deny, to a highly organised community such as Ezra left behind him, some central legislative and spiritual authorities in the Persian and Greek periods. The two functions were afterwards separated, and it may well be (Büchler *Das Synhedrium in Jerusalem*, 1902) that two distinct Synhedria, one with civil the other with religious jurisdiction, existed in the last period before the fall of the Temple. As regards the Synagogue service, it probably opened with an invocation to prayer, must have included the *Shema* (Deut. vi. 4—9, xi. 13—21; to which was added later Numbers xv. 37—41), a doxology and confession of faith, the eighteen benedictions in a primitive form, readings from Pentateuch and Prophets, and certain communal responses. With this Schürer (*loc. cit.*) is in substantial agreement. The actual contents of the liturgy long remained fluid; the fixation of the Synagogue prayers was the work of the post-Talmudic Gaonim of the seventh century onwards.

Attention should be paid to a remarkable difference of language with regard to prayer and study of the Law. Nothing better brings out the real character of Pharisaism. It relied on rule and based much confidence on the effect of good habits. But it left free the springs of emotion and the source of communion. While, then, Shammai urged (Aboth i. 15) "Make thy *Torah* a fixed thing" (עשה תורתך קבע), Simon—a disciple

of Johanan b. Zakkai—proclaimed (*ib.* ii. 18) “Make not thy *prayer* a fixed thing” (אל תעש תפלתך קבע). Study was to be a habit, prayer a free emotion. The true tradition of Pharisaism from beginning to end of the first century is seen from Hillel, through Johanan, to his disciples—one of whom in answer to Johanan’s problem: “Go forth and see which is the good way to which a man should cleave” said: “A good heart.” And the master approved this solution as the right one (*Aboth* ii. 13). No fixation of a liturgy changed this attitude. Prayer might be, as time progressed, ordained to follow certain forms, but within those forms freedom prevailed, as it still prevails in the most conservative Jewish rituals.

With regard to reciting the Scriptures, the public reading of the Law for occasions was certainly instituted by Ezra, and continued by his successors in authority; the passages read were translated into the vernacular Aramaic (*Targum*). We know that the Palestinian custom, when finally organised, provided for a cycle of Sabbath lessons which completed a continuous reading of the Pentateuch once in every three years (*T.B. Megillah*, 29 b). As to the antiquity of the beginnings of this Triennial Cycle Dr Büchler’s epoch-making *Essays* leave no doubt (*J. Q. R.*, v. 420, vi. 1). The strongest argument for this supposition is of a general character, but it is reinforced by many particular facts. Many events in the Pentateuch which are left undated in the original are dated with exactitude in the Rabbinic tradition. This is amply accounted for by the simple fact that these events are contained in the Sabbath lessons which fell normally to be read on certain dates, which Tannaitic tradition thereupon associated with those events. This argument enables us to work backwards and assume a somewhat early origin for the fixation of the readings on those particular dates.

It may here be of interest to interpolate one or two instances of the light thrown on passages in the N.T. by the Cycle of lessons. Dr King (*Journal of Theological Studies*, Jan. 1904) has ingeniously shown that the association (in the second chapter of the Acts) of the Gift of Tongues with Pentecost falls in admirably with the Triennial Cycle. The first year of the Cycle began on Nisan 1, and the opening verses of Genesis were then read. The eleventh chapter of Genesis was reached at the season of Pentecost. This chapter narrated the story of Babel, i.e. the Confusion of Tongues. The Gift of the Spirit is a “reversal of the curse of Babel.” A second instance may be found in the Fourth Gospel. The discourse of Jesus