In conclusion, what is the theological and ethical significance of the elusive Pharisees for Christians today? Increased awareness of the various ancient sources and the history of critical research about the Pharisees helps us to learn and teach cautionary tales about how we often stereotype and distort our perceived enemies and opponents. And in that process of misrepresentation lies a road that can lead to conflict, violence against others, and the violation of our most sacred convictions. Hopefully, theological educators will find more effective ways to communicate persuasively to the pluralism of Christian audiences the fruit of critical scholarship made available in *The Pharisees*.

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II

A few years ago, I served on the oral exams committee of a graduate student whose first language is Turkish. After the exams, one of my colleagues asked this student about his plans after graduation. Was he going to return to his family in Turkey, or spend the summer working locally? The student smiled and responded, "I'm going home to see my family before starting work. I'm no Pharisee!" I assumed that I had misheard until my colleague asked, "What do you mean when you say you're not a Pharisee?" Our student looked surprised. "In my culture," he told us, "a Pharisee is someone who is unkind or uncharitable. I assumed this is an English word you knew."

This student was probably aware that the Pharisees, a Jewish sect in the late Second Temple period whose members were credited with the transmission of Jewish tradition, are prominently featured in the New Testament as the enemies of Jesus. But to him, the word "Pharisees" bore no relationship with those ancient people. What surprised me about my student's use of the term was not the word's negative connotation. I had heard many homilies decrying the Pharisees' corruption and knew that even Pope Francis has used the term in statements that implored Catholics to abstain from unethical behavior. What surprised me is that the association between the Pharisees and misanthropy was so dominant that it had made its way into a language and culture that was not predominantly Christian.

Given that the term "Pharisee" has been associated with unethical behavior since the first century, my reaction was probably naïve. The idea that the Pharisees are hypocritical, unethical, and corrupt finds expression throughout the gospels, even the Gospel of Matthew, which is perceived by scholars as the

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most explicitly Jewish gospel. In Matthew 23, Jesus lambasts the Pharisees for their hypocritical behavior:

> The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have people call them rabbi … But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them. (Matt 23:2-13)

Matthew's treatment of the Pharisees and his conflation of Pharisees and Jews had a lasting impact on the relationship between Jews and the early Jesus community. The gospel states, for example, that the Pharisees and chief priests were trying to arrest Jesus (Matt 21:45-46). But in the scene leading up to Jesus' death, the "chief priests and the elders" persuade unidentified crowds of Jews to turn on Jesus by asking the Roman governor Pilate to execute him. When Pilate consents to the pressure of the crowds, the people express their sense of personal responsibility for killing Jesus, declaring, "His blood be on us and on our children!" (Matt 27:25). The Pharisees are not mentioned, yet early interpreters of this story were quick to associate the Pharisees' bad intentions with all Jewish people who rejected Jesus' messiahship.

The Gospel of John provides additional examples. In this gospel, the Pharisees and chief priests hear reports about Jesus from "some" Jews, convene the Sanhedrin in response, and search for a solution to the unrest caused by Jesus (John 11:46-52); the text states "from that day on they planned to kill him" (John 11:53). The Pharisees and chief priests lead the charge in seeking to arrest Jesus (John 11:57 and 18:3). At the moment of Jesus' crucifixion, however, only Jews and soldiers are mentioned as present at the scene of the crime:

> [Pilate] went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.… [The soldiers] kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus

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> came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." (John 18:39–19:7)

Regarding the matter of who was truly responsible for the death of Jesus, John casts a wide net. According to his gospel, the Pharisees, the chief priests and police, and the crowds of Jews are all guilty of murdering Jesus. Picking up on these conflations, the church fathers blamed all Jews for the murder of Jesus. They also accused the Jews of bearing qualities that Jesus lobbed specifically against the Pharisees. By the fourth century, a new word was introduced to describe the Jews' collective responsibility for the death of Jesus: *deicida*, God murder.

Since that time, the Pharisees have been subject to two conflations that continue to damage the Jewish-Christian relationship. The first conflation is between Pharisees and qualities that are considered anathema to Christian goodness. The second is the conflation between the Pharisees of the first century and all Jewish people who have existed across both time and space. These conflations have transformed the Pharisees into the conduit by which all manners of evil travel to the Jews.

In 1965, almost two thousand years after Jews were first subjected to these accusations, the Second Vatican Council reversed the church's position that all Jews are responsible for Jesus' death. But the church did not explicitly address the second conflation concerning qualities that have been understood to be Pharisaic (and by extension, Jewish). The church has not yet dismantled the idea that Jews should not be presented as enemies of Christianity, in part because this conflation remains intact.

The first section in Amy-Jill Levine and Joseph Sievers' new coedited volume, *The Pharisees*, corrects these conflations. This section, entitled "Historical Reconstruction," is a collection of analyses that study ancient texts that mention the Pharisees. It includes five articles that focus on the portrayal of the Pharisees in New Testament literature and two that compare the presentation of the Pharisees in the New Testament with other early Jewish literature. Five other chapters mine Jewish literature for information about the Pharisees.

This section challenges both conflations mentioned previously. By analyzing New Testament portrayals of the Pharisees alongside other ancient Jewish texts, these chapters demonstrate that New Testament portrayals of the Pharisees do not align with other material about the historical Pharisees. In

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doing so, these chapters challenge the long-standing conflation between Pharisees and misanthropic traits. And by distinguishing between the Pharisees and other first-century Jews, and between the Pharisees and the later rabbis, this section challenges the second conflation, which associates the Pharisees with all Jews.

The next section of this volume, entitled "Reception History," examines how the Pharisees have been portrayed in theological writings and material culture over the past two millennia. Because the Pharisees have figured more prominently in Christian rather than Jewish imaginations, most of the articles in this section home in on Christian portrayals of the Pharisees. Within this Christian framework, however, the breadth of media is striking. The focus of these articles ranges from medieval theological literature to art, music, and the stage. This section also brings to light the intransigently enduring disparity between the historical Pharisees and the hermeneutical Pharisees. Consider, for example, Shaye Cohen's aptly titled article, "The Forgotten Pharisees," which notes that "at some point … Jews rediscovered the Pharisees" (287). Cohen's remark is striking when read alongside Angela La Delfa's article on Pharisees in Christian art, which opens by noting that "iconography of the Pharisees [is] mainly, if not solely, of Christian origin" (319). By the time one reaches the end of this section, the chasm between the historical Pharisees and the Christian depiction of Pharisees seems unbridgeable. Faced with this chasm, a reader might feel overwhelmed by the extent to which historical Pharisees have been sidelined in two thousand years of Christian representation. Does historical reality matter in conversations that seek to present the Pharisees as a hermeneutical symbol of what Christians are not? To whom do these symbolic Pharisees belong?

The Pharisees does not offer simple answers to these questions. But its third section, "Looking to the Future," points the way. Amy-Jill Levine's article, "Preaching and Teaching the Pharisees," and Massimo Grilli and Joseph Sievers' coauthored article, "What Future for the Pharisees?," are especially significant. Levine's article provides practical recommendations for how Christians might portray the Pharisees in their teachings, and Grilli and Sievers' article forges a path for Christians to rethink their understanding of the Pharisees. This article closes with seven recommendations for Christians to challenge their perceptions of the Pharisees without weakening their religious identities.

This final section beggars significant theological questions. After two millennia of allegorizing the Pharisees, is it really possible to transform how Christians have thought with regard to Pharisees—and with Judaism? This challenge may only be resolved when Christians more thoroughly examine

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all the ways that they think with Jews and about Judaism today. For many Christians, the essence of the Jewish people lies in their embodiment of divine messages that Christians must properly interpret. Even in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, during a time when the precise nature of the Jewish covenant is under reconsideration, Christian theologians agree that the Jews play a significant role in Christian salvation history. To be clear, this is a supporting role. Jews have no part in producing, writing, or directing the script.

Separating actual Jews from the Jews that Christians have imagined for the past two thousand years is a colossal task. It requires Christians to recognize the degree to which they have assigned Jews a role in their own story, a role that most Jews do not recognize. It requires Christians to acknowledge their dependance on an imagined Jew, an imagined Judaism, and an imagined Pharisee, and it invites Christians to reassess their understanding of salvation history. Grilli and Sievers are correct to insist that Christians need not demonize Judaism in order to valorize Christianity. But Christian theologians have not yet resolved the matter of how, precisely, Jews can enjoy the salvific benefits of a living covenant outside of Christ. They have not yet developed a meaningful understanding of Judaism outside the allegorizing framework of Christianity.

By pointing out the differences between historical Pharisees and the Pharisees of the Christian imagination, this volume shines a light on the task of future generations of Christians, who will be called to construct a new model of Christianity that does not depend on an imagined Jew. This project may take centuries. But it is an essential step along the process of the "Parting of the Ways," which has not yet reached completion. Commitment to this project will help to ensure the integrity of Jews and Christians and the future of a healthy Jewish-Christian relationship.

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III

The Pharisees is a collection of essays that brings together a diverse group of scholars around the topic of an enigmatic historical group referred to as Pharisees. The various perspectives and methodological approaches both provide answers and raise new questions concerning who the Pharisees were, what they believed, how they were depicted, and the implications for how they are understood. The meticulous analysis by each scholar

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