Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities

Essays in Honor of

Ed Parish Sanders

Edited by

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PART ONE

Prologue
Professor Sanders at Duke

D. Moody Smith

Ed P. Sanders is an outstanding scholar of the first order. His contributions, which affect three centrally important areas of New Testament investigation—Judaism, Jesus, and Paul—have become benchmarks for his colleagues. Any scholar who wants to be taken seriously in these important areas must take his work into account.

In chapter two Sanders discusses how and why his scholarly career focused on setting the record straight about the nature of ancient Judaism in its relation to Christian beginnings. Older views of Judaism, largely informed by a reading of the New Testament against the defining background of Christian theology—even theology derived from it—have to be reexamined from the ground up, if not discarded. Judaism must be studied in its own right. This has been affirmed previously, but Sanders has shown more fully than anyone else why this is so.

It is probably correct to say that there are more Jewish scholars with a firsthand understanding of ancient Christianity than there are Christian scholars with a firsthand understanding of ancient Judaism. Most Jewish scholars have lived in nominally Christian cultures all their lives. The reverse is not true. In fact, most Christians have looked at Judaism through Christian texts—that is, through Christian eyes. Ed Sanders undertook the difficult task of understanding a religious tradition, into which he was not born, from within. That took a lot of time, effort, and chutzpah, even from someone endowed with his obvious capacities.
The importance of Sanders’s scholarship is obvious and well recognized, and there is no need to belabor it. To get tenure at Duke, however, one must qualify in three areas: scholarship, teaching, and university service. Would he have been granted tenure on the basis of qualifications in each of these spheres? In reality this is a moot question, inasmuch as he was already a tenured professor at Oxford when he was invited to Duke. But it is enlightening to consider his contributions to teaching and service.

What about Ed P. Sanders as a teacher? First of all, he has been an important teacher of his colleagues. His teaching has been like an axe laid at the root of the tree. It has challenged long-held, but frequently unexamined, assumptions, and it has challenged older paradigms. As one of our colleagues has put it, “it belongs to not knowing not to know that you do not know.” Sanders has taught us to question what we thought we knew, and thus to begin again to learn. This is a fundamental aspect of teaching.

What Sanders has done for his colleagues he also has done for graduate students, to whom he emphasizes the importance of working with primary sources—not only reading them, but learning how to read them. In taking the lead in revising Duke’s doctoral program in New Testament, Ed insisted, for example, that students study Judaism by doing research on ancient texts and not on modern ones, not even his own. His seminars on Pharisaism and Paul have been well populated by appreciative students. In dealing with graduate students, in many ways the most vulnerable of mortals, Ed has been a demanding yet sensitive mentor, harder perhaps on good students than on weaker ones. To paraphrase an ancient saying: better to be Sanders’s graduate student than his New Testament colleague. (I tried to think of an analogy to the famous pun on Herod’s hueios and huios, but could not come up with one. What about “Better to be Sanders’s mathētēs, pupil, than his mathēmatikos, mathematician or astrologer”? This is as close as I could come.)

Ed P. Sanders also has willingly and effectively taught undergraduate students. He has required them to read the New Testament itself—no small task! He has not simply laid things out systematically for them, which he can do so well. Rather, he has encouraged students to understand imaginatively, in ways meaningful to them, by suggesting modern analogies. He invites—indeed, requires—undergraduates to come to his office to discuss their projects with him before they write papers.
Yes, I think Ed Sanders could have gotten tenure at Duke on the basis of his teaching—demanding yet imaginative, and even humane! What about university service? By comparison, I think of the example set by one of our common mentors, who was alleged to set committee meetings in conflict with one another and then use each as an excuse for not attending the other.

Sanders not only attended committees but also chaired them. One that I remember particularly well was the committee of the whole New Testament faculty, which took on the task of reviewing and revising courses, examinations, and other requirements of the Ph.D. program. What should candidates for the Ph.D. in New Testament be required to know and to do? Every student should not have to do the same thing, but there should be commensurability. No one of us was surprised that Ed P. Sanders insisted on firsthand familiarity with primary sources, Jewish and Hellenistic, as well as biblical.

What did surprise me was his adroitness in handling the faculty discussion. He adopted a procedure that was one of the two strokes of genius I have observed in the management of academic discussions. Jameson Jones, once dean of Duke Divinity School, invoked the first. He directed that when a proposal was set before the faculty, those opposed to it should speak first. Then, if no one did, there was no need for speeches in favor. This saved an enormous amount of faculty time. Sanders, on the other hand, proposed setting time limits on discussions: “Shall we discuss the means of fulfilling the Greek competency requirement for thirty minutes?” We would agree, and, with an end in view, we often decided what we needed to in that space of time. If we didn’t, we might choose to take fifteen more minutes. Each of these proposals is ingenious. In the first place, they recognize the tendency of academic people to air their views at considerable length, whether to satisfy God, humanity, reason, and truth, or merely in order to fill a vacuum. Such proposals cause colleagues to think about whether they ought to speak at all, and if so, for how long. This is a major achievement.

Although Sanders’s move from Oxford to Duke may have astonished many colleagues elsewhere, it had been in the works for a while. In fact, Duke’s decision to invite Sanders to the Department of Religion was not simply an effort to acquire a star, a “world-class scholar,” to use the hackneyed phrase. In a real sense, he filled a lacuna created with the departure of W. D. Davies,
who had retired nearly a decade before. Davies's view of the relation of Jesus, Paul, and earliest Christianity to its Jewish roots was, in a real sense, positive and all-consuming. Christianity was not the rejection of Judaism, but its continuation along a new track; yet the rails for that track were already present within Judaism. Davies's position was congruent with a long-standing point of view at Duke, which, I think, had Calvinist (rather than Lutheran) theological roots, represented by W. F. Stinespring, James L. Price, James M. Efird, and Hugh Anderson, each of whom was Presbyterian or of the Church of Scotland. (Moreover, on the Jewish side, there has been Eric M. Meyers, Lerner Professor of Judaica and Archaeology, who is a leading authority on the archaeology of the Holy Land during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as well as a prominent Old Testament scholar. Meyers, for more than three decades, has taught and advised many New Testament students as well as students of the Old Testament and Judaism.) The reigning New Testament theologian at Duke was Oscar Cullmann, for whom the Old Testament ended in fulfillment and not, as Rudolf Bultmann put it, miscarriage.

Thus, when W. D. Davies read my essay on “The Use of the Old Testament in the New” for the Stinespring Festschrift and exclaimed, “On the last page you have given the game away to Bultmann!” I was astounded. But there was some substance to Davies’s assertion. What I had intended to suggest was that the Old and New Testaments were tied together by a common vocabulary and conceptuality that reflect “a common way of talking and thinking about Man [my cap!] and God in their confrontation and interaction,” that is, a common theological anthropology. After one has read the New Testament in Greek, what is the next easiest Greek text to read? The Septuagint, by far. Bultmann’s view is reflected in these important facts. What is missing in Bultmann is the sense of historical continuity between Old Testament, postbiblical Judaism, and early Christianity that is significant for the constitution of the Christian Bible. But for Bultmann, historical continuity was not an important and positive theological category. Jesus himself stood fully within Judaism. There was no historical or theological continuity even between Jesus and earliest Christianity, for the latter was inaugurated by Jesus’ death and his disciples’ faith in his resurrection. (Of course, the reality of the resurrection lay precisely in that faith, rather than in a historical event.)
For Cullmann, precisely the opposite is true. In his *Christ and Time*, which we all read as theological students at Duke, Cullmann affirms, against Bultmann, “I consider it impossible to regard the fact of a development in time as only a framework, of which we must strip the account in order to get at the kernel (‘de-mythologizing’ or ‘myth-removal’).” Cullmann rightly sees that for Bultmann the theological interpretation of history was the basic myth with which Christianity, to be true to itself, must dispense. Thus, in the New Testament, Paul and particularly John become Bultmann’s canon within the canon. In Bultmann’s interpretation of John, Jesus’ death and resurrection are the end of history, and the passages that look toward a return of Jesus, resurrection, or final judgment are dismissed as later additions to the original text.

These alternative and mutually exclusive ways of viewing history and belief, or theology, make a crucial difference in how one assesses early Christianity’s relation to Judaism historically as well as theologically. On Bultmann’s terms, Christianity is, in effect, the negation of Judaism; on Cullmann’s, it is the continuation, albeit on a new track. This may be an oversimplification, although, I believe, not a misleading one. The negation of the theological significance of history and the negation of Judaism go hand in hand. In the Basel-Duke axis, Scripture, whether the Old or New Testament, was authoritative. Judaism could be viewed as one continuation of scriptural *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history), and early Christianity another.

In this mix, into which Ed came by his acceptance of a Duke professorship, there is one other religious—perhaps one should not say confessional or theological—ingredient: the Wesleyan. James B. Duke was a Methodist and, appropriately, a religious humanist. When in 1924 he founded Duke University with what was at the time an enormous gift ($40 million) to Trinity College in Durham, North Carolina, he stated, perhaps naively, that he regarded education, along with religion, as “the greatest civilizing influence,” and that “preachers, teachers, lawyers, and physicians . . . can do most to uplift mankind.” A plaque at the center of the Duke campus in effect describes Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of the university: “The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teaching and character of Jesus Christ.” Although Jesus is then described as “Son of God,” this is more the young and fearless
prophet (and teacher) of ancient Galilee than the Christ of the later creeds. In his chapter, Ed Sanders mentions having been brought up in a liberal, Protestant church—the Methodist church.

We Methodists may be looked down upon by other major Protestant churches and confessions because of our alleged lack of theology and our pietism. In fact, we are not a confessional church. John Wesley assumed a broadly Christian (specifically Anglican, ultimately Catholic) context in eighteenth-century England. His problem was not Jesus and Judaism or Christianity and other religions, but how the beneficent reality of Jesus might be realized in personal and social life and amid conditions of human degradation. In fact, he did not specify Christian baptism as a prerequisite to partaking of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. Wesley and Wesleyanism were in origin orthodox but, paradoxically, not concerned with orthodoxy. Instead they focused on the redemption of the human condition. Methodist, or Wesleyan, churches have never been state churches. I would argue that Methodists have never persecuted others to the point of death for religious or theological reasons. Growing up a Methodist in South Carolina, I was aware that the Pharisees were bad guys, but it never occurred to me to think of them as Jewish.

More seriously, Methodism itself was a renewal movement within the Anglican church. It did not originally involve a fundamental rethinking of basic questions of theology and church order. (Later on, John Wesley himself, as an elder, ordained other elders, having come to believe that the New Testament did not distinguish fundamentally between bishops and elders and thus gave him the right to ordain.) In the continental Reformation, based on Scripture and particularly on the exegesis of Paul's letters, there was a different situation. Emphasis on faith rather than works in debate and polemic with the Roman Catholic Church went hand in hand with Paul's insistence on faith, not works, in his polemic against the so-called Judaizers intruding into the Gentile churches that he had founded. For one outside of that continental Reformation tradition, it is not so obvious that the essence of Christianity is to be found in a rejection of works-righteousness in favor of faith in God's righteousness. Rather, participation in Christ may well seem the more fundamental theological category. So it is with Sanders. (Actually, exegetes in the Reformed tradition, e.g., Albert Schweitzer, sug-
gested this almost a century ago.) The beginnings of Christianity are not rooted in polemic with or against Judaism or anything else.

All this is by way of saying that Ed P. Sanders’s primal instinct to understand Judaism fairly, from the inside, has its own cultural and religious roots. In becoming a colleague at Duke, he was entering a congenial world. There was a tradition of continuity between the Testaments, and the historical bridge for that continuity was what used to be called intertestamental Judaism, which is of course a term that presupposes the Christian Bible. (“Postbiblical” Judaism presupposes the Hebrew Bible. So we settle for “Second Temple Judaism,” which presupposes neither but is unintelligible to most people!)

Thus the initial Christian theological impetus is not based upon conflict with Judaism. That came soon enough and was expressed strongly, if in different ways. Christianity began as a renewal movement within Judaism that sought to encompass Judaism. Yet it did not initially define itself over and against Judaism as its opposite, seemingly rejecting Judaism and all its works. Christianity, as it would later become, was originally a positive movement. Needless to say, it soon became involved in polemic, but at least in the case of Paul this polemic was not with Jews per se but with other believers who continued to embrace and enforce aspects of Jewish practice and belief as a matter of course. Jesus and Paul obviously thought of themselves as Jews. Only in John and Acts have “the Jews” become, so to speak, externalized, and in the case of John only after bitter inner-Jewish conflict (see John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).

Having sketched the intellectual and theological context of Sanders’s appointment at Duke, I need to make clear that I am not imputing any or all of these views to Sanders himself. Nor should one assume that as W. D. Davies’s student and successor he continued Davies’s work on Paul and on the Jewish milieu of nascent Christianity along the lines already laid down. He agrees, of course, with Davies that justification by faith (not works) is not the center of Paul’s theology. Yet Sanders’s groundbreaking article “Patterns of Religion in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism” already marks a breakout in an independent direction.² Paul (and by implication New Testament Christianity in general) represents a pattern of religion different from a Judaism in which “covenantal nomism” was centered in maintaining a relationship already established by
God. Paul, on the other hand, emphasized first of all not staying in an established relationship with God but getting into a new relationship through the work of Christ as Lord. While that new relationship can be understood retrospectively on the basis of Jewish scripture and tradition, it would scarcely have been anticipated on that basis alone. Sanders’s view is persuasive. Perhaps the analogy of railroad tracks is helpful again: the tracks are there already, but they now are reworked, altered, and bent in new directions.

Sanders’s tenure has marked the culmination of Duke’s steady rise to preeminence in certain aspects of New Testament study. Duke has become a leading option for advanced study oriented around scriptural foundations, the Jewish milieu of the development of early Christianity, and the emergence of New Testament theology. In this process, and in the tailoring of doctoral programs to fit Duke’s strengths, Sanders has been a central figure and has played a critical role.

As we look toward his eventual retirement from Duke, we ask ourselves, “How shall we replace Ed P. Sanders?” That task will not be easy, for he has spent his entire career learning what he knows. In the present North American religious studies scene, this would be no easy task to replicate, but it was not easy for Ed, either. To study and become learned outside of your own tradition is a rare and difficult accomplishment. But for the world in which we must live, there could scarcely be a more important one.

Notes

Comparing Judaism and Christianity

An Academic Autobiography

E. P. Sanders

When Fabian Udoh and I discussed the possibility that I would contribute an essay to the conference, we assumed that my effort would be a response to the other papers. I soon realized that this would be impossible. Twenty-four papers were scheduled, and at best I could have discussed only a few points. I decided instead to give an account of the circumstances in which I wrote some of my books. More precisely: What did I think that I was doing? I do not think that my intellectual biography is either impressive or important, and there are dangers in later reflections. Hindsight may serve as rose-colored glasses, and thinking about one's youth may be merely self-indulgent. Thus I was by no means confident that I should write an academic autobiography. After I presented it at the conference, however, the remarks of others led me to think that it serves a useful purpose. I still think that my books addressed important topics, and it may be worth something if I say how I came to write four of them. I shall begin with a brief account of my youth.

Childhood and Education

I grew up in Grand Prairie, Texas, in the 1940s and 1950s. Although Grand Prairie is close to both Dallas and Fort Worth, families such as mine,
which was at the lower end of the economic spectrum, lived almost entirely in our small town, seldom traveling to the nearby cities. Besides being separated from the influence of major cultural attractions, we were also very remote from the world of advanced learning. Thanks to my mother’s college textbooks, I read extensively in English literature and world history, but despite this I had no conception of a life lived as a scholar and (of course) no idea of what such a life would require. The struggle to learn languages became a dominant factor in my life. I did not meet a foreigner, or even someone who spoke a foreign language, until I went to college. Before I started high school (at age sixteen), the only foreign language available was two years of Spanish (though Spanish speakers had not yet settled in the area where I lived). Thanks to the influence of my boyhood friend Dudley Chambers, who was the son of the superintendent of Schools, two years of Latin became available when we began high school. Dudley and I, together with a few others, dutifully worked on Latin. I attended the only college I could afford, Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth, which generously provided a scholarship and arranged for a part-time job. There the only language available was French, which I studied for three years, gaining fair fluency in reading. We had no language laboratories, and I did not acquire the ability to comprehend spoken French.

I have been asked why I did not go elsewhere, for example, to Europe, to learn modern languages. There are two answers: (1) I did not think of it, nor did anyone mention it to me; and (2) I could not have afforded it. Since travel is now very cheap relative to incomes, and it is hard to comprehend how difficult it was to escape small-town (or small-college) isolation, I shall offer an anecdote from a novel, published in 1946, that described small-town America in the 1920s and 1930s. In it, a mind reader is explaining the trick of knowing what is in a person’s mind. First, one must realize that there are only a few subjects: health, wealth, love, travel, and success. The most-asked question was, “Am I ever going to make a trip?”¹ Money was not quite as scarce, nor was travel quite as rare, in the 1950s as it had been in the 1920s and 30s, but the circumstances of my own family were not much different from the period of the Great Depression. A round-trip (return) ticket to Europe would have cost more than my father’s annual income, and we were not entirely abnormal. One of my teachers, a member of one of the
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town’s more prosperous families, once spent a week in New York, and her description of the trip filled us schoolchildren with wonder. It was the first time I had heard of anyone traveling so far (except, of course, to fight during World War II). I knew of only one small group of Grand Prairians who went abroad before I graduated from college.

The teachers and many other people in Grand Prairie knew that I had abilities. They talked to me about how well I could do in the professions. A local doctor, William Colip, offered to guarantee my expenses in medical school if I made A’s in pre-med courses. Alas! I was interested in the humanities, especially history and literature, and the only well-educated people I knew were in the three professions that flourish in small towns—law, medicine, and ministry. I learned many things from going to church, but not that reading the Bible required Hebrew and Greek, nor that understanding it required German and French. I had local boosters, but none who could point me in the right direction.

I knew from the time I was in college (1955–59) that I wanted to study ancient history and specialize in religion. But I did not know what I needed to know, nor did anybody tell me, until I went to the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas (1959–62). There, it readily became apparent that I needed to learn Greek, Hebrew, and German (as well as French). I took all the language courses I could while at SMU (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac), and I took summer courses in German (besides selling cookware, which, along with scholarships and work in local churches, supported me). My life basically changed when William R. Farmer, the senior New Testament scholar at Perkins, decided that I should have a year of study abroad. Bill and Samuel Crossley, a friend and former employer who was then director of Christian Education at University Park Methodist Church, set out to raise money. A large contribution came from a member of First Methodist Church in Fort Worth (where Sam and I had formerly worked). Bill Farmer, for his part, contacted Rabbi Levi A. Olan of Temple Emanuel in Dallas, who received a very large anonymous donation from one of the members of the Temple. I felt overwhelmed by their generosity, and I especially vowed that the gift from Temple Emanuel would not be in vain. Altogether, Bill and Sam raised about $10,000. Bill wrote some letters of introduction. I had met two major scholars when they
E. P. Sanders

lectured at SMU, and both were very helpful at this stage of my life (as well as later). David Daube encouraged me to come to Oxford and said that he would help me if I were there. Morton Smith contributed letters of introduction and advised me on people who could be helpful in Israel. Most fruitfully, both Bill Farmer and Morton Smith wrote to Yigael Yadin. And I set off on my adventure (1962–63).

I studied German in Göttingen from June until October 1962 and then went to Oxford to see what David Daube could arrange. This resulted in my working on rabbinic Hebrew for two terms. Dissatisfied with my progress, I decided to study modern Hebrew to learn how to read unvocalized texts, and went to Jerusalem. There Yigael Yadin twisted the arm of Mordechai Kamrat, who accepted me as a private pupil, and I began to acquire a serious amount of Hebrew.

Almost all of the people mentioned in the previous paragraphs are now dead, and some did not live to see whether or not their selfless assistance to a poor, ignorant boy paid off. I hope that I have been half as helpful to a few as these great, busy men were to me.

Paul and Palestinian Judaism (P&PJ)

In September 1963, when I started graduate school at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where the New Testament faculty members were John Knox, W. D. Davies, and Louis Martyn, I had three views about the field that I was entering and what I would like to do: (1) Religion is not just theology, and in fact is often not very theological at all. New Testament scholarship then (as now) paid too much attention to theology and not enough attention to religion. Bultmann, who came out of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, bore a lot of the responsibility. His turn toward Lutheran theology was part of a larger movement, and I mention him only because he was so influential in New Testament studies. (2) To know one religion is to know none. The human brain comprehends by comparing and contrasting, and consequently comparison in the study of religion is essential, not optional. (3) New Testament scholars ought to study Judaism.
I cannot now say what had convinced me of numbers 1 and 2 (too much theology, comparison necessary). Bill Farmer had told me item number 3 (study Judaism), and I simply believed him. This explains why, before beginning doctoral work, I had gone to Oxford, where Daube got me into a class, taught by David Patterson, that was translating Mishnah Sanhedrin, and also why I went to Israel to study modern Hebrew. It was furthermore the intention to study Judaism that led me to Union. W. D. Davies was the leading New Testament scholar who wrote about the rabbis, and he had also argued in favor of the interpenetration of Judaism and Hellenism. Moreover, Union was across the street from Jewish Theological Seminary, where I took some courses.

Although I do not know for sure why I thought that students of religion should not concentrate so exclusively on theology, I do know some of the things I had read. My two favorite books were E. R. Goodenough’s *By Light, Light* and C. H. Dodd’s *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. I liked the mysticism that was so obviously important in the study of Philo and John, and at the time I identified it as part of “nontheological religion”: it is more about experience than about thought. Dodd’s detailed use of passages from Philo and the Revelation of the Thrice-Great Hermes to illuminate John was, I thought, marvelous. And I found Goodenough’s portrayal of mystic Judaism enticing. While at Union, I also started working my way through Goodenough’s *Jewish Symbols*, which impressed me almost as much as *By Light, Light*.

I spent some weeks reading about ancient astrology, which I then started seeing on lots of the pages of the New Testament. Astrology constituted more evidence of a fairly nontheological form of religion.

Even if I could, I would not now take you through the rest of my reading list. I found that meeting the requirements of a doctoral program distracted me from my true studies, and I also knew that I could not write a comparative doctoral dissertation. It was bound to take a long time, and I wanted out. So I hopped through the hoops with as much alacrity as I could and finished in two years and nine months, graduating in May 1966.

My doctoral dissertation was called “The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition.” It dealt with a question of form criticism: did the Gospel tradition change in consistent ways, becoming (for example), longer, more
detailed, and less Semitic? This question went back to the interest in synoptic studies that Bill Farmer had planted in me, although I did not write on the “synoptic problem” as such. The dissertation left me knowing less about the “authenticity” of the synoptic tradition than Bultmann (for example) had known, since it argued that there were no “laws” of the tradition that governed change. The material had altered in the course of transmission, but I concluded that we do not know in what ways it changed. At the time, I did not see any way of beginning work on the historical Jesus, but I wanted to postpone that anyway, since I intended, after graduation, to begin a career as a comparativist. Having written a doctoral dissertation that was substantially influenced by the agenda of Bill Farmer, I proposed after my doctoral work to take up a project that would be more like the work of W. D. Davies.

My plan was then to return to Israel to begin reading rabbinic literature. I won a scholarship, but job offers began to arrive. The year was 1966; the United States had recently learned that the Constitution did not prohibit teaching about religion in tax-supported universities. The baby boomers were arriving in full force; universities were expanding; departments of religion were springing up and growing. Growth and expansion affected Canada as well. Eugene Combs of McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario) phoned and asked if I would come for an interview. I replied, as I had to others, that I was going to Israel. Eugene, however, proposed that I come for two years and then take leave to go to Israel; they wanted to get New Testament studies started in their new department. So that’s what I did. I remained at McMaster from 1966 to 1984, though I spent a few years away, either on leave or as a visiting professor elsewhere.

Why study the rabbis when what had most interested me was Hellenistic astrology and mysticism? I had thought of a Jewish topic that was not theological and that allowed for comparison and contrast—the three points that I regarded as essential. First, I would carry out an intra-Jewish comparison. Then I would figure out a way to compare something Jewish with something Christian. My conception of project number one, an intra-Jewish comparison, was largely determined by E. R. Goodenough. I had read in his Jewish Symbols—and of course I believed it—that George Foot Moore’s Judaism really existed, though it was a long way from being “normative.” Moore’s rabbinic Judaism, rather, was a small island in a vast ocean of Hel-
lenistic Jewish mysticism. Goodenough was not expert in rabbinic literature, though, as Samuel Sandmel observed, by reading it in English he “absorbed a tremendous amount of its quantity and quite a bit of its quality.” Perhaps out of modesty, Goodenough had little to say about how Moore’s rabbinic Judaism and his own Hellenized Judaism related to each other, except that they were quite distinct and that Hellenized Judaism was by far the larger kind of Judaism. I had read Wolfson and Belkin on Philo, and so I knew that there were studies of Philo and the rabbis. But I thought that Goodenough’s Philo—not Wolfson’s—was the real Philo, and that therefore the real Philo had not yet been properly compared and contrasted with the rabbis. I also knew that there were lots of things that I could not do, such as study the legal topics common to Philo and the rabbis. Nor, I thought, was it necessary, in view of previous work. Since mysticism was appealing, I first thought of comparing Philonic mysticism with rabbinic, but I decided against it on the grounds that mysticism was generally not very important in rabbinic literature. Apart from mysticism and astrology, I knew of another nontheological aspect of religion: pious practices. I usually called these “practical piety,” but “pious practices” is a superior term.

I did not know anything about ancient pious practices. Well, I knew about prayer and—very vaguely—sacrifice, and I also knew from Goodenough that mysticism might include mystic rites. Guided by ignorance and a few clues, I thought that there must be bunches of pious practices, that I would be able to find them, and that by comparing rabbinic and Hellenistic Jewish practices I could make a contribution to understanding the relationship between Goodenough’s Judaism and Moore’s Judaism. Thus I could do a Jewish, comparative study on a nontheological aspect of religion and eventually follow it up by turning to pious practices in early Christianity. To say that at this stage I “saw through a glass darkly” would be to claim far too much.

In any case, the plan was hatched: compare the pious practices of the rabbis and Goodenough’s Jews (Philo + Jewish symbols). I realized that I would have to dig for the pious practices. Moore and Goodenough did not give sufficient information.

Cheered on by my colleagues and the administration at McMaster, I won a fellowship and headed to Israel to study the rabbis (1968–69).
I should confess that it never occurred to me that I could not do what I proposed. Along with a great deal of ignorance, I carried out of Texas the simple assumption that anyone could do anything. Ignorance, in a way, was bliss. Had I known the difficulties, I would probably have tried something much more modest. But, as things were, I wrote a grant application, referees wrote letters, and a committee approved the application. The project appeared feasible, given a bit of work. It was, in fact, several years after I completed *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* that I realized that it was all beyond my abilities. I have felt like a fraud ever since, although I have worked hard to try to cover it up. (I have by now reached the point of viewing it as salutary that when one learns a lot, one also learns how much is yet to be done.)

Perhaps I could put this reflection thus: At a fairly early stage, I became aware of the fact that I sometimes applied the principle “nothing ventured, nothing gained,” and other times the principle “better safe than sorry,” but that I did not know in advance which one to follow. When young, of course, I mostly lived by the first maxim.

In the fall of 1968, my beloved friend and teacher, Mordechai Kamrat, took me in as a student again. Kamrat was one of the two most remarkable people I have ever known; the other was David Daube, with whom I had had numerous discussions in Oxford from 1962 to 1963. Kamrat knew all languages. I once heard him converse in Danish, and once he and I watched a TV program from Cyprus: he translated, though he had never been in a Greek-speaking country. And he could teach anyone anything. Like many Israelis, he was chronically short of money. I paid him a weekly sum that seemed reasonable at the time; it was about the same as I later paid for my daughter’s piano lessons.

Dr. Kamrat had started studying the Talmud at the age of four in Poland. Befriended by a Catholic priest, he was given access to a library and began to acquire languages other than Yiddish, Aramaic, Hebrew, Polish, and Russian, and knowledge other than Talmudic. He ended up with a Ph.D. from the University of Krakow in pedagogical psychology, went to British-controlled Palestine (the only one in his family to escape the Holocaust), and figured out how to teach Hebrew to immigrants from anywhere. He taught me modern Hebrew and rabbinics in the same way: inductively, with drill. We started with the Mekhilla. I went to Moshe Schreiber Buchhand-
lung, dusted off my five-year-old modern Hebrew, and asked advice about editions. I came back with most of the Tannaitic midrashim. Fortunately, I did not know that Lauterbach had translated the Mekhilta into English. When I later consulted the existing German translations of the midrashim, I am glad to say, I found the Hebrew clearer than the German. I don’t mean to say that I achieved fluency in rabbinic Hebrew. A long way from it. I read slowly and sometimes needed help, even at the end of the year. And now, thirty-five years later, my Hebrew is quite rusty, and I have to look up lots of words that I once knew. As I indicated above, I shared the common American weakness of starting to learn foreign languages after I became an adult. Moreover, I’m not gifted. Being around Kamrat was sufficient to make me very modest about my ability to learn languages.

I was very fortunate that we started and ended with the Tannaitic midrashim, in which I had no translations available. I had Danby with me, but luckily we did not read the Mishnah, and so I had to figure out the rabbis in their own language—with, of course, Dr. Kamrat’s help.

I fell in love. The first things I noticed about the rabbis were their humanity, tolerance, and good humor. I also noted, of course, their academic love of precision. They wanted to find out what animal the Passover victim should be, how it should be cooked, and so forth, and they were keen to establish the meaning of ben ha’arabayim. Besides the desire to understand the sacred text, which makes them very much like New Testament scholars, toleration of disagreement was their strongest and most consistent characteristic. The discussion of how long a man could be alone with a woman who was not his wife—which we eventually reached—struck me as a notable case of rather humorous whimsy. There was a kind of playful one-upmanship. Is “as long as it takes to swallow an egg” longer or shorter than “as long as it takes for a palm tree, bent by the wind, to snap upright”?

Besides making it through most of the major and minor Tannaitic midrashim, the other book that I read that year was J. N. Epstein’s Mevo’ot le-Sifrut ha-Tannaim. It was eye-opening. I toyed with efforts to translate it, but it is full of quotations, for many of which the editor did not give the source. This is all very well for those who have memorized the Talmud, but it was too much for me. What I learned, though, is that it is possible to do critical historical work with the literature, and in particular to identify the...
s’tam, the anonymous voice in each tractate or even each chapter. I knew, of course, that I could never do it, but Epstein’s demonstration has caused me ever since to look suspiciously at critical work that does not begin with identification of the anonymous voice.

At the end of the year, I reread George Foot Moore’s Judaism. I planned to compare his Judaism to that of Goodenough, and now that I had read some of Moore’s favorite sources, I thought it was time to reread his great work.

I have mentioned that I was struck by the humanity and tolerance of the rabbis. I had, therefore, begun to form the view that what some of my favorite New Testament scholars, such as Rudolf Bultmann, had told me about Pharisaic or rabbinic Judaism was not true. Now, as I read Moore, I saw a polemic against another view between the lines. And I concluded that on more or less every point that he discussed, he was correct. The rabbis really believed in the grace of God and the efficacy of repentance. So Moore wrote; so the mere reading of rabbinic literature proved. I did not like Moore’s organization of the material, which basically followed the Christian creed: the idea of God, followed by Man (which now would be called Humanity), Sin, Atonement, and the Hereafter (along with some other topics). I thought that it should be possible to present the material in a way that was more natural to it.

By now, my topic had begun to change. I had, of course, found several pious practices, but I was distracted from them by the growing feeling that many influential New Testament scholars had misrepresented the rabbis. I did not have Bousset or Jeremias with me, and I did not yet know about Moore’s own polemical article on Christian scholars who had written about Judaism, but the need to do something about mendacity was growing. I had been told that the rabbis were deeply concerned with the effort to save themselves by doing more good deeds than bad, and that they were therefore either anxious (because they were uncertain of how the count stood) or arrogant (because they were confident that they had done enough good deeds to save themselves). I realized that possibly such rabbis were lurking somewhere in the Mishnah and Tosefta—which I had not yet read—but I doubted it. They were certainly not to be found in the Tannaitic midrashim. (It eventually turned out that they cannot be found anywhere.)
“You all know the rest, in the books you have read”: When I returned to McMaster, I was ready to write an argument about how to see rabbinic literature theologically, without recourse to the phony category “legalism.” That is, since I thought that rabbinic literature as a whole had been misrepresented, it would not suffice to publish on only a few of its details, such as pious practices. I felt compelled, rather, to offer a more holistic presentation, especially of rabbinism’s undergirding theology. Nevertheless, this new requirement did not remove my main conviction: I had to compare, just as Gene Kelly had to dance. But besides leaving behind the intention to study pious practices, I had moved a long way from Philo, and I felt the need to look at Palestinian literature earlier than the rabbis. So I spent some time studying the Dead Sea Sect and comparing the Scrolls with the rabbis. Then I studied the Pseudepigrapha of Palestinian provenance. At some point along the way, “covenantal nomism” came to me. It seemed to me to grow organically out of the material: the literature is not about what Protestants call “legalism” (now sometimes called “merit theology”), which is effort toward self-salvation, but it does deal with law. It is “nomistic” in its basic subject matter. But why did the rabbis and other Jews pursue these subjects at all? Was it not because God had given the law? And why should Jews obey it? To save themselves? Rabbinic literature lacks concern with individual salvation. So why did they pursue the details of law? Does not the effort presuppose the concept of election? And so on. I shall summarize the main arguments of the book below.

When it turned out that the Dead Sea Sect, while differing in some ways from the rabbis, held approximately the same views of election and law, I knew that I needed a contrast. And so I turned to Paul, who was largely a stranger to me, but who was the man who previously had been compared with the rabbis by my teacher, W. D. Davies.

Before reaching this point in the writing of what became *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, my New Testament expertise was in the Synoptic Gospels, on which I had spent several years. I had taken (if I remember correctly) a total of two courses on the Greek text of parts of Paul’s letters, one taught by Victor Furnish at Perkins and one by Louis Martyn at Union. I had also read a list of books about Paul and had been examined on Paul as part of my doctoral work. When I began lecturing at McMaster University, I tried to
present a Bultmannian Paul. I soon realized that this just did not work (the
text did not fit the text) and that I needed to do something else. By then
I had learned the most important lesson of my life: you really know what you
learn for yourself by studying original sources. I would never have come
to my understanding of the rabbis by reading secondary literature. I could
decide without firsthand study that Moore was better than Bousset, but that
was by no means the same as internalizing the rabbis’ modes of argument
and their spirit. Furthermore, I remembered that one of the most exciting
afternoons of my life was when I had read the Pauline letters through at
a single sitting. Putting these two things together, I simply started read-
ing through Paul’s letters and making notes. Second Corinthians 12 made
it perfectly clear that Paul was some sort of mystic. “Being crucified with
Christ,” “dying with Christ,” and “being one person with Christ” were obvi-
ously very important concepts to him, though brushed aside by most Prot-
estant research in favor of “justification by faith,” which was understood
as judicial declaration of fictional (“imputed”) righteousness. After going
through the letters a few times, I returned to Albert Schweitzer and then
read some of the pre-Schweitzer German scholars, who wrote prior to the
re-Lutheranization of German scholarship. I was relieved to see that other
people had found approximately the same Paul that I had “discovered.”
These bodies of literature—rabbinic literature, Dead Sea Scrolls, selected
Pseudepigrapha, and Paul’s letters—made up the sections of the book.

I originally wrote the parts on Jewish literature without polemic, trying
to imitate the tone achieved by Moore in his major work, which omitted the
vigoroust attacks of his article. But, near the end of my work, during what
was about the sixth revision of the section on the rabbis, I decided that
Moore had been wrong. Bultmann cited Moore as if he only gave additional
details about the rabbis to flesh out the portrait in Bousset’s book. I was
not going to let that happen again, and so I decided to make it clear that
some scholars were wrong and that the rabbis had been misrepresented.
Thus the polemics of the book when it finally appeared.

The only important point not yet covered is the question of “getting
in and staying in.” This came from studying the issue of what to compare
with what, and the principal negative example was the work of my re-
vered supervisor, W. D. Davies. W. D. started with basic biblical and Jewish
conceptions—the exodus and the giving of the law—and went in search of parallels in Paul. He found a few and concluded that Paul was a rabbinic Jew who simply replaced an unknown Messiah with a specific candidate, Jesus. There was a new exodus and a new law, the law of Christ. It seemed to me that this gave to these two points an importance that, in fact, they do not have in Paul’s letters. I could not see “dying with Christ” as a new exodus, nor did I find a great concern in Paul to establish a new “law of Christ.” So I dubbed the effort *Motivgeschichte*, the study of individual motifs, and went looking somewhere else. I failed to note, I am embarrassed to say, that W. D.’s exodus and law are my covenantal nomism. In rejecting the way in which W. D. had set up the comparison, I did not grasp how close we were on the Jewish side. His error (as I still think it to be) in the analysis of Paul, which led him to miss what was both novel and essential in Paul’s letters, blinded me to his correct perception of the two ingredients of Judaism that determine its basic characteristics. (I am sure that the largest category of my brain consists of things that are buried in it but that I do not call to consciousness at the right time.)

In any case, I decided to enlarge the categories and to discuss “getting in and staying in.” The weight of each topic is, of course, quite different in the various bodies of literature. Paul is obsessed with getting people into the new movement, and his discussions of correct behavior, once in, are rather cursory. The rabbis were concerned with correct behavior by the in-group and seldom had occasion to mention “getting in”—but, of course, concern over the behavior of the in-group implies that it existed. In the Scrolls one finds both emphases. Despite the unequal weight, I had a topic that is important all round—even when, or perhaps all the more when, it is assumed rather than argued. In-group literature assumes the importance of being in the in-group. 

Paul’s break with Judaism, I thought, had to do with getting in; on behavior within the in-group he agreed closely with other Jews of his day. The difference is his requirement of faith in Christ. This, and only this, I proposed, led to a break between Pauline religion and his native Judaism.

I had some regret that the topic had become theology—but only some, since the mendacity of much of New Testament scholarship had become so important to me. The book did at least meet my other two goals: a comparison that included Judaism.
By the time I had finished the book, I realized that in many ways it was very close, both in method and substance, to the work of Samuel Sand- 

mel. Sam agreed to read the typescript, and I visited him at his home in Cincinnati. For the entirety of two afternoons, we sat on his porch while he patiently commented on aspects of the work. He persuaded Ben Zion Wacholder to check my translations of previously untranslated rabbinic passages. I add these names to the list of those who donated large amounts of precious time to my work.

I sent the book to the publisher in October 1975. Very negative readers’ reports in both England and the United States led to a delay. Thanks to the fact that John Bowden, managing editor of SCM Press, finally read the typescript himself, the book as I had submitted it was published in 1977.

I shall now give a summary of the principal arguments, beginning with a negative point: (1) The book is not about the sources of Paul’s thought. I granted that many or most topics in Paul could be paralleled in Jewish literature, but I was not pursuing an argument about where Paul got his ideas. Failure to note this point has misled several readers, some of whom have criticized me for using Jewish material later than Paul, while some have even imagined that in proposing that Paul had a different “pattern of religion” I meant that he had no connection with Judaism. (2) In most of Palestinian literature, the “pattern” of “getting in and staying in” is simple: one is in by virtue of the election (or covenant); one stays in by remaining loyal to the Jewish law. These two basic convictions gave rise to the term “covenantal nomism.” (3) In Paul, all are “out” of the people of God and may enter only by faith in Christ. (4) The two sets of terminology summarized by the phrases “being justified [righteoused] by faith” and “becoming one person with Christ” essentially mean the same thing: these are the terms that indicate entry into the people of God: one “dies” with Christ or is righteoused by faith and thus transfers into the in-group. (5) Once in, the member of the body of Christ should behave appropriately. In detail, this usually means the adoption of Jewish rules of ethics and other forms of behavior. (6) In both Judaism and Paul, people in the in-group are punished or rewarded depending on how well they adhere to the standards. Punishment and reward, however, are not “salvation”; people are saved, rather, by being in the in-group, and punishment is construed as keeping them in (as
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in 1 Cor 11:27–32). (7) Paul does not accept the adequacy of the Jewish
election for getting in; he begins the process of a theological rupture with
Judaism by requiring faith in Christ. (8) Formally, Paul sometimes accepts
“the whole law,” but it turns out that his Gentile converts do not actually
have to keep all parts of the Jewish law, and that sometimes even Jewish
Christians should depart from Jewish practice (as in the case of Peter in
Antioch). (9) Consequently, Paul’s “pattern” of religion is not the same as
“covenantal nomism.” The efficacy of the election is rejected, and the law is
accepted with qualifications. (10) Paul’s pattern is, however, like covenantal
nomism in that admission depends on the grace of God, while behavior is
the responsibility of the individual—who, of course, is supported in his or
her efforts by God’s love and mercy. (11) Since one gets in by dying with
Christ, and since Paul’s outlook is strongly eschatological, I dubbed his pat-
tern “participationist eschatology,” though “eschatological participation-
ism” might have been better.40

Jesus and Judaism (J&J)

When I told my wife that I did not have much to say about Jesus and
Judaism, she expressed her regret, since (she said) it is my best book. But,
still, the explanation of what I was trying to accomplish is much briefer
than the story of how I came to write P&PJ. The period during which I
wrote J&J (1975–84) included the period of the McMaster project on Jew-
ish and Christian Normative Self-Definition, the title of which contributes
to the title of the present volume.41 For various reasons, these were difficult
years for me, and I want to record my thanks for the kindness of friends and
colleagues: Al Baumgarten, Phyllis DeRosa Koetting, Alan Mendelson, Ben
Meyer, John Robertson, and Gérard Vallée. The most important person in
my life, however, was my daughter, Laura, who grew from five to fourteen
years old during that time.

With regard to the book: I thought of calling it “how to write a book
about Jesus without knowing much about what he actually said.” In the
years since my doctoral dissertation, I had become even more distrustful
of relying on a collection of “authentic” sayings to tell us what we want to
know about Jesus, and the most important academic decision I made was to shift the discussion away from Jesus' sayings. I had spent years on criteria of authenticity and had all sorts of lists, but I finally concluded that adding up a list of authentic sayings was never going to explain who he was or what happened. And so I went for what I regarded as better evidence: the skeleton outline of his career and especially his symbolic actions, namely, the calling of twelve disciples, the entry into Jerusalem, and the turning over of tables in the forecourt of the temple. There was also the highly significant fact that John the Baptist, who was an eschatological preacher, and early Christianity, which was a Jewish eschatological movement, frame Jesus' career. During a brief but memorable conversation with Morton Smith at a meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS) in Toronto, we agreed that one has to focus on such facts as these. I was enormously cheered. I was already inclined to give a good deal of weight to Jesus as a healer, since I wanted to emphasize "deeds" to help offset the tendency of academics to present Jesus as only a teacher, and, of course, talking with Morton about miracles strengthened that inclination.42

I wanted to base J&J on the most reliable or "bedrock" tradition, but when I later wrote The Historical Figure of Jesus for the "general reader," I realized that criteria for authenticity strike most readers as being merely a convenience by which an author gets rid of unwanted material. Moreover, the importance of finding the right context grew in my mind, with the result that I eventually concluded that if one has the right context for Jesus, which sayings are quoted do not matter very much. Consequently, in Historical Figure I quoted many more sayings as coming from Jesus than I had used in J&J. This does not imply full belief that they are all authentic.43

My principal concern in J&J was to establish what led to the results: first to Jesus' death and then to the formation of a group of his followers into a new sect. I doubted the authenticity of most of the passages depicting Jesus in conflict with the Pharisees, and in any case I found the disputes to be rather minor. So what drove history if not fatal Pharisaic animosity? I proposed that it was Jesus' self-conception as the one who announced the reassembly of Israel and the coming of the kingdom of God, his dramatic acts (especially the entry into Jerusalem and the temple scene), and the system in Judea, which made the high priest responsible for maintaining locally
the *pax Romana*. Unhappily, I did not use the word “system,” and, in a book written at about the same time, Ellis Rivkin explained “what killed Jesus” more clearly than I did. Still, I thought, I was helping to put to rest the view that dominated much scholarship: that Jesus was killed because he offended the Pharisees by favoring love, mercy, and grace. I submitted the manuscript to the publisher in the spring of 1984; the book appeared early in 1985.

To put the main arguments of the book briefly: Jesus was a prophet of the restoration of Israel who began as a follower of an eschatological prophet (John the Baptist) and whose ministry resulted in an eschatological Jewish movement (early Christianity, especially as seen in Paul’s letters). He pointed to restoration in word and deed, proclaiming the kingdom as soon to arrive and indicating the restoration of Israel especially by calling the Twelve. He made dramatic symbolic gestures pointing to this hope. One of them, overthrowing tables in the temple court, led Caiaphas to the view that he might start a riot. The requirements of the Roman system resulted in his execution. His followers continued his movement, expecting him to return to reestablish Israel. This naturally led to their incorporation of the prophetic hope that in the last days the Gentiles would turn to worship the God of Israel.

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**Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E. (P&B)**

In September 1984 I moved to Oxford and again, as when I first read the rabbis, fell in love—this time with the environment created by scholars in other aspects of the ancient world: Geza Vermes, soon the young Martin Goodman, Robin Lane Fox, Fergus Millar, Angus Bowie, and Simon Price. I wanted to be like them. Well, I could never be that clever or learned, but I could go back to nontheological religion and, specifically, to religious practice, which I had dropped after 1968–69.

While writing *Jesus and Judaism* I had become fascinated with the riches of Josephus, whom I had neglected when writing *Pē-PJ*. When I had to explain the history of Jesus in light of the power structure of his day, of course, the only source outside of the Gospels was the work of Josephus—not the Mishnah. In 1968–69, I had learned from Epstein that most Tannaitic...
literature comes from the period of R. Akiba and R. Ishmael or later—that is, the last three quarters of the second century. I never thought that rabbinic law governed Jewish Palestine in Jesus’ day. The very first bit of rabbinic literature I read (please remember) was Mishnah Sanhedrin, which obviously is not a manual of how law courts worked.48 I remember being told by friends at what is now the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research that they were scandalized because an Israeli scholar—whose name (alas!) I do not remember—had told them that M. Sanhedrin does not represent the law in effect at Jesus’ time. This was no surprise to me.

To understand the legal and governmental system, I turned to Josephus, and I found him to be most illuminating with regard to how things really worked politically and judicially. Furthermore, the Gospels and Acts support him. In the days of the prefects and the procurators, Jerusalem was governed by the aristocratic priesthood.

So now, when I decided at long last to return to pious practices, I wanted to make more use of Josephus, while incorporating other literature (including early rabbinic literature) when possible. I tried to decide what Jews really did in a few dozen cases. I do not think that I have ever written down what my rules of thumb were, and so I shall summarize them. Assume five sources: the priestly writer, Josephus, the Mishnah (standing in for Tannaitic literature), Philo, and other (Dead Sea Scrolls, late biblical books, Pseudepigrapha, and Apocrypha). Agreement among the first three is decisive: Leviticus, Josephus, and the Mishnah. That is what people really did in the first century. Agreement between Leviticus and Philo alone is dubious: it probably shows only that Philo read the Bible. Even agreement between Leviticus and Josephus alone must be queried, especially so if Josephus’s wording is exclusively that of the Septuagint: sometimes he told his assistant just to write down a summary from the LXX (or so I imagine). Josephus plus the Mishnah against everybody else is highly probable.

These rules of thumb do not cover everything. No combination works every time; sometimes a source in the “other” category, such as Nehemiah, weighs very heavily. In a few cases the Dead Sea Scrolls make a major contribution to the study of general practice, especially when a passage has a close parallel in rabbinic literature. Put briefly, the DSS + the Mishnah = a genuine pre-70 C.E. topic (but not necessarily a decision about what the majority practice was).
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Why not cut articles out of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* and paste them in a book organized by subject instead of alphabetically? The *Encyclopedia Judaica* is biased in favor of the rabbis. Too few of its authors had shaken off the old views that all rabbinic material is *traditional* and that the rabbis always governed Israel, which leads (for example) to the use of fourth- or fifth-century Babylonian material to determine what first-century Jews did in Palestine.

Besides trying to improve on the *Encyclopedia Judaica* on several topics, I wanted to pursue the question of who ran what, which involved study of the Pharisees’ role and the passages about a Sanhedrin. Moreover, I argued in favor of a common Judaism, consisting of a few beliefs and several practices, which, with variations, were very widespread or even universal.

Thus, the contents of the book are mixed. The common denominator of these various studies is *real life*: how things actually worked and what most Jews actually did when they were observing the commandments.

Apart from the primary literature itself, the strongest single influence on my views of the Pharisees’ role, the judicial system, how government worked, and how to define common Judaism was the work of Morton Smith. He had pointed out that Josephus’s narrative does not support some of his summaries, such as the statement that whenever the Sadducees were in office they had to submit to the views of the Pharisees, who controlled the populace.\(^49\) Smith had said that “normative Judaism” should be defined as whatever the Pentateuch, the ordinary priests, and the common people agreed on.\(^50\) He had also sponsored a “low” view of the authority of the Pharisees, a view that lives on in the work of his students and admirers.\(^51\)

After I finished the chapter “Who Ran What?” I thought of sending the typescript to Morton, but I decided to wait and give him a copy of the book, which I imagined I could deliver in person. That was a mistake that grieves me: he died, so he did not know that I was fully in support of him on these points. What is so wonderful about Morton’s views, of course, is that they reflect the primary sources so beautifully. I think that those who work their way through the material will come to the same conclusions—unless, of course, they are in the grip of presuppositions and prefer summaries to the study of cases as they appear in detailed narrative—the narratives of Josephus, the Gospels, and Acts.

When I moved to Duke University in August 1990 and started reading the work of members of the Jesus Seminar, I realized that I should have
added a section about government from the Roman point of view—how different parts of the empire were governed and were not governed—and about the placement of the Legions. I tried to repair some of these omissions in the Festschrift for Professor Räisänen.52

I wanted the main value of P&B to be the studies of actual practice.53 In addition to these, the principal arguments are: (1) There were beliefs and practices common to worldwide Judaism, not dictated by any party, that constitute “common Judaism.”54 (2) The Pharisees were, after the time of Salome Alexandra (76–67 B.C.E.), a small but highly respected party within Judaism that had a varying amount of influence from time to time and issue to issue. (3) Real power, however, resided in the rulers: one of the Hasmoneans; one of the Herodians; the prefects or procurators of Judea (after 6 C.E.); and, in Jerusalem during the period of “direct” Roman rule, the aristocrats, especially the aristocratic priesthood. The evidence indicates that the Pharisees did not dictate policy to any of these groups or individuals.55

Conclusion

It is not up to me to say what, if anything, I have achieved. I can say that I still find the main theses of these three books—all the theses listed above, plus a few not mentioned—correct. I can name lots of mistakes and have thought often of things that could have been done in a better way. But I still believe in covenantal nomism and that it (and many practices) were shared by most Jews; that Paul’s only fundamental objection to his native religion was that it did not include faith in Christ; that it was Jesus’ symbolic actions in Jerusalem that alarmed Caiaphas into thinking that he might start a riot. And so (alas!) I am largely unrepentant.

Somewhere along the way, Hellenistic mysticism dropped out—not the mysticism that figures in the study of Paul, but Hellenistic mysticism of the sort described by Goodenough: the quest to leave the material world and enter the noetic, real world. I had not realized how completely this sort of mysticism had disappeared from my view until the spring of 2002, when, for the first time in more than thirty years, I taught a course on Philo. The course was mostly on the historical treatises and the Special Laws,56
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although we did note the passage according to which Moses entered the
darkness where God was, we made passing reference to the mystic meal
in Joseph and Aseneth chapter 16, and we considered Goodenough on the
scene from Dura Europos in which Israelites cross the sea. By Light, Light,
which I reread, no longer grips and persuades me as it once did, but I am
nevertheless sorry that I never got back to Hellenistic mysticism and that I
did so little in Greek-speaking Judaism.

In this connection, I should return to the question of the sources of
Paul’s thought. Troels Engberg-Pedersen recently indicated to me that he
expected me to oppose the work that he and others have done on Paul and
the Stoics. That is not at all my attitude. I compared and contrasted Paul
to the Jewish literature that I had studied, with no intention to claim that he
relates only to it, or that he derived all of his ideas from it. I am incompetent
to treat Paul’s sources thoroughly, since I am incompetent to compare him
to Greco-Roman material. If I had two decades ahead, with as much energy
as I had in my thirties, forties, and fifties, I would love to take up this issue.
My first instinct would be to review Goodenough’s project and to begin
with hellenized Judaism. Let me put it this way: Paul wrote that “we look
not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is
temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal” (2 Cor 4:18). In 1 Cor 15:53
he wrote about imperishability and immortality. In such passages, it seems
to me, we hear a very “Greek” voice, and, in fact, 2 Cor 4:18 sounds down-
right Platonic. Did Paul read Greek philosophical sources? Did he absorb
such ideas from his culture? Had this terminology and way of thinking al-
ready been accepted in the Judaism in which he grew up?

In the case of Philo, we may be fairly confident that he inherited a
strongly hellenized Judaism and added to it by direct study of Greek philo-
sophical works, including at least some of Plato. I would be inclined to
think that Paul did not have the sort of supplemental education in Greek
philosophy that Philo had, and so I would try my hand first at the third pos-
sibility: the idea of an unseen world that is eternal (= real) in contrast to the
sensible world, which is transient (= not real), had already penetrated the
Judaism that Paul inherited. I do not know this to be true, but that is what
I would assume at the outset, which would lead me to the study of Greek-
speaking Judaism, including both the literature and the symbols. Philo was
not conscious of putting a Greek veneer on something like rabbinic Judaism; rather, true Judaism as he saw it was deeply impregnated with Hellenistic thought (following Goodenough).\(^{61}\) The same thing, though put less strongly, might be true of Paul. It seems to me that we need further study of this whole issue, of both the indirect influence of Greek thought on Paul via the synagogue and the direct influence coming from Paul’s own knowledge of his environment. I would not wish anything that I have written to be seen as opposing such efforts. On the contrary, I think that further study is required, and I wish that I could join in.

I have never lost my confidence that Goodenough really discovered something—a deeply hellenized Judaism. Nothing could please me more than to see this enormous topic pursued with renewed vigor.

With regard to my own life and work, however, Goodenough was demoted, and his influence is probably imperceptible.\(^{62}\) In terms of the sort of scholarship that I have found most helpful, I have a list of major items: Albert Schweitzer on both Jesus and Paul,\(^{63}\) Morton Smith’s essays,\(^{64}\) Saul Lieberman’s Tosefta ki-Fshutah,\(^{65}\) Epstein’s Mevōt,\(^{66}\) Davies’s The Gospel and the Land,\(^{67}\) the dozens of essays by Daube,\(^{68}\) Robin Lane Fox’s books on Alexander and Pagans and Christians,\(^{69}\) Burkert’s Greek Religion and Homo Necans,\(^{70}\) Fergus Millar’s The Roman Near East,\(^{71}\) A. H. M. Jones’s Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces,\(^{72}\) and Lee Levine’s Jerusalem.\(^{73}\) I list these books, I suppose, partly to indicate my long-standing interest in works that deal with the nitty-gritty of religion (such as sacrifice) and those that allow us to set religion firmly in a historical and social setting. Most of these works have the additional advantage of having been published early enough to influence my interests and views during their formative period.\(^{74}\)

When discussing my early interest in mysticism and astrology, I hinted but did not say that I was very attracted to the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule and, in fact, to pre–World War I German New Testament scholarship in general—before the turn toward Luther, which has narrowed that scholarship, to its detriment. For a long time I thought that Deissmann had written the best book on Paul, and these days I rather miss the company of these now ancient Germans. I should look at some of them again.

I still think that many of the people now engaged in New Testament research know far too little about ancient history and far too little about ancient
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sources other than the Bible. I continue to hope for more and better comparative studies. They are not all that easy, but they are an awful lot of fun.

Notes


11. I have been unable to find the source of the analogy “like a small island in a vast ocean.” On the two kinds of Judaism, however, and their relative scope, see Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* 12:185–90, 197–98; 4:3–24. In *By Light, Light*, Goodenough had hesitated about the relative size of “normative” and nonnormative, mystical Judaism: the latter was the Judaism of “at least an important minority” (p. 5; similarly p. 9). Even here, however, some of his claims were stronger: “if Judaism in the circles that were using the Septuagint had come to mean what I
have indicated . . . ” (p. 9). In any case, it seems to have been the work that went into producing *Symbols* that resulted in his confidence that mystic Judaism was far larger than rabbinc Judaism.


14. My only published effort at comparing Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism is E. P. Sanders, “The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies* (ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs; SJLA 21; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 11–44. I wrote this when *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* was almost finished, and so the section on Palestinian Judaism repeated covenantal nomism (though I made use of 2 Baruch, which I decided not to include in *P&PJ*). I proposed that Joseph and Aseneth and the “real” Philo (Goodenough’s Philo) reflect forms of mystical Judaism, but that, nevertheless, in parts of Philo the importance of the covenant (called by him the *politeia*, “commonwealth”) shines through, as does the view that the law should be obeyed.


16. Along with numerous others, I am deeply indebted to the senior administration of McMaster University. Though the sciences predominated in the university and accounted for its reputation in Canada, the administrators wanted strength in the humanities and social sciences, and this included sponsoring and paying for a large and excellent Department of Religion. Our work—and, I admit, especially mine—was materially assisted in numerous ways. I remember with deep gratitude Mel Preston, Bill Hellmuth, Alvin Lee, Art Bourns, Saul Frankel, and Peter George.

17. The fellowship was from the Canada Council, later called the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

18. “All languages” is hyperbolic. As far as I discovered, he knew Latin and Greek, as well as all of the Slavic, Germanic, Romance, and Semitic languages that are spoken today. He once told me that he had dabbled in Chinese—which may have meant that he knew quite a lot.


21. Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16 do not entirely agree on the animal or how it was cooked, and so the rabbis had to sort these matters out. See, e.g., Sifre Deut Pisqa 129.

22. “Between the two evenings” perhaps originally (Exod 12:6; Num 9:3) meant “twilight.” That did not allow sufficient time, however, to slaughter tens of thousands of animals in the temple courts, clean up, and perform the regular evening sacrifices. Thus the “right” meaning of the term had to be discovered. According to Mekilta Pisha (Bo’) 5, it meant “after the sixth hour of the day,” i.e., after noon; see Jacob Z. Lauterbach, Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (3 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1933), 1:43.


24. We read the Mekilta, Sifre on Numbers and Deuteronomy, most of Sifra, Sifre Zuta on Numbers, and parts of the Mekilta of R. Shime’on b. Yohai.


26. It took a long time for the difference between Pharisees and rabbis to emerge into full consciousness in Jewish and Christian scholarship. I am inclined to attribute general clarity on the distinction to Jacob Neusner, The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70 (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1971–1972). On the other hand, during 1968–69 I knew that I was studying the rabbis and not the Pharisees, and I conceived my project in terms of bodies of literature, not named groups. Epstein (see n. 25) was doubtless influential, but I am unable to give the history of my own early views about the relationship between the pre-70 Pharisees and rabbinic literature.


30. For some years, I have been lecturing on the false construction “legalism,” pointing out that, in addition to other flaws, it requires a degree of individualism that cannot be found in ancient Jewish literature. It assumes that Jews thought that
each individual had to achieve self-salvation, with no group benefits and no collective privileges. Legalism is an invention of polemical attack on Roman Catholicism and Judaism. I hope eventually to publish this and other related lectures.

31. Reading the works of Max Kadushin made a holistic study even more attractive, and helped me think that it could be done. See, for example, Max Kadushin, Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought (New York: Bloch, 1938); Max Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind (2nd ed.; New York: Blaisdell, 1965). I was also encouraged to search rabbinic literature for basic assumptions and underlying theological principles by reading Abraham Joshua Heschel, Torah min ha-Shamayim ba-Aspaqlaryah shel ha-Dorot (2 vols.; London: Soncino, 1962–1965). The work has now been translated into English: Heavenly Torah: As Refracted through the Generations (ed. and trans. Gordon Tucker with Leonard Levin; New York: Continuum, 2005).

32. In those ancient days, twelve principal scrolls comprised the collection. See Eduard Lohse, ed. and trans., Die Texte aus Qumran (2nd ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971). I also found it possible to read through virtually the entirety of the secondary literature. Perhaps needless to say, this could not be done now, except by someone whose full-time occupation is Scrolls research.


35. Paul often displays great ingenuity in arguing for certain behavior, as in the chapters on idolatry in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. But the result is not in the least novel: do not directly engage in the worship of idols. Often, however, he simply gives general admonitions, such as “be blameless” (1 Thess 5:3). His creativity appears in his discussions of “getting in” and in some of his arguments about behavior, not in the content of that behavior.

36. The argument about “assumption” or “presupposition” in Jewish literature has proved hard for many readers to see: they seek proof texts. I have discussed this and related issues in “Covenantal Nomism Revisited,” to appear in a forthcoming volume of the Jewish Studies Quarterly, edited by Dana Hollander and Joel Kaminsky.


38. I also had fruitful discussions of the book with C. F. D. Moule and W. D. Davies. These trips, as well as my salary and secretarial assistance, were supported by a Killam Senior Research Scholarship. The scholarship was continued for the year 1975–76, while I worked on Jesus and Judaism and began (with Ben Meyer and Al Baumgarten) the McMaster Project on Normative Self-Definition; see n. 41.
39. Covenantal nomism appears even in Philo ("The Covenant as Soteriological Category," n. 14). In P&J, I described it by using such words and phrases as "common," "basic," "assumption," "presupposition," "underlying agreement," "underlying pattern," and "basic common ground" (e.g., 70, 71, 75, 82, 85, 424). I thought of it as a "lowest common denominator" of many types of Judaism, though I chose not to write that phrase. In rereading Goodenough in the spring of 2004, I discovered that he had written that Jews were loyal to "some common Jewish denominator," which consisted of loyalty to the Jewish people and belief in the Bible. He also referred to this as "minimal Judaism." He wrote that Philo "still believed with all his heart that Jews had a special revelation of God in the Torah, and a peculiar relationship with him." See Goodenough, Jewish Symbols, 12:6–9. These pages, which I had read in 1964 or 1965, contained no pencil marks indicating that I had regarded the terms or the proposal as important. I nevertheless wonder whether they lodged in my subconscious mind, to surface ten years later. I wish that I had remembered these pages, since I would have been delighted to have Goodenough's support on both Philo and Judaism in general.

40. E. P. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983, repr., 1985) was, as John Bowden complained to me, basically a long footnote to the Paul section of P&J. The earlier book had dealt with Paul in a less detailed way than New Testament scholars expect, and I wanted to give full exegetical detail of the most complicated topic: the law. I remain satisfied with the discussion of the various contexts in which Paul writes about the law. He answers diverse questions, and the answer to each question is consistent, but the various answers, when placed side-by-side, give a confusing picture. One cannot derive from them a systematic view of the law. To this discussion I appended a treatment of his view of the Jewish people, offering fairly detailed exegesis of Romans 9–11.

41. This project was supported by a very generous five-year "Programme Grant" from the SSHRC (1976–81). Our work was continued for another year with sponsorship from McMaster University.


43. E. P. Sanders, The Historical Figure of Jesus (London: Allen Lane Penguin, 1993).

44. Ellis Rivkin, What Crucified Jesus? The Political Execution of a Charismatic (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984). Rivkin's book appeared after I submitted the manuscript to the publisher. Unfortunately, in the summer and fall of 1984 I was engaged in moving to Oxford, and I did not read Rivkin's book until after I had sent in the proofs. In retrospect, I see that I should have insisted on inserting a footnote even at that late date.

45. J&J was written with the aid of a Killam Senior Research Scholarship at the beginning of the project and a SSHRC Leave Fellowship near the end. Most of the book was written while I was Visiting Fellow Commoner at Trinity College, Cambridge (1982).
46. I assumed that Seán Freyne had accurately and adequately explained what Galilee was like in Jesus’ day, and so I saw no need to say much about it. When later I moved to the United States (August 1990), I began slowly to learn that completely erroneous views were becoming popular here. Nevertheless, when I finished *Historical Figure* in 1992, I had not perceived the full influence of these views. I thought that they would gradually disappear. On Freyne’s work and my own later efforts, see n. 74.

47. Bill Farmer had urged me to read Josephus’s *Jewish War* while I was at Perkins (1959–62), and I had complied. What he saw in it, however, was (1) that lots of Jews were zealous for the law, which led to the view (2) that the Pharisees controlled Judaism and made people zealous, which was bad because (3) zeal for the law is the same as legalism, which is horrible. I eventually learned that items 2 and 3 were not true, but this experience made me miss most of the actual treasures in Josephus. Farmer’s views of Judaism were taken entirely from Joachim Jeremias. Approximately this same view of Josephus and Pharisaic control has now been argued by M. Hengel and R. Deines, “E. P. Sanders’ ‘Common Judaism,’ Jesus, and the Pharisees: Review Article of *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* and *Judaism: Practice and Belief* by E. P. Sanders,” *JTS* 46 (1995): 1–70. The view is no better now than it was then.

48. This statement applies to the tractate taken as a whole, including especially the structural statements and the view that “sages” constituted the membership of courts. I assume that some of the material is pre-70 and may even be of Hasmonean origin.


53. In the course of working on *P&b*, I wrote several studies, many of which would not fit. Some of these were collected and published in E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International, 1990) (hereafter *JLM*). The main subjects are “The synoptic Jesus and the law”; “Did the Pharisees have oral law?”; “Did the Pharisees eat ordinary food in purity?”; “Purity, food, and offerings in the Greek-speaking Diaspora”; and “Jacob Neusner and the philosophy of the Mishnah.”

54. John P. Meier, *Companions and Competitors* (vol. 3 of *A Marginal Jew*; New York: Doubleday, 2001), uses both the terms “common” and “mainstream” Judaism.
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(pp. 7–8; also pp. 329, 384). “Mainstream” excludes the Qumran sectarians because they did not worship in the Jerusalem temple. This is certainly a fair distinction, but I would note that even here there was common agreement on the temple considered abstractly, the disagreement focusing rather on architecture, calendar, and the high priesthood.

55. Work on *JLJM* and *P&b* was supported by a Guggenheim Fellowship, and *P&b* was completed while I was on leave from Duke University. The study of immersion pools (*miqva’ot*) in Israel was funded by a British Academy Research Grant. I am indebted to Hanan Eshel for instruction during visits to many archaeological sites.

56. Whereas once upon a time I felt totally inadequate to compare Philo’s legal opinions with those of others, I now feel reasonably able to do this. On the other hand, I have no confidence in my ability to discuss mysticism in a comparative way, and I have always been incompetent to discuss Philo’s relationships with the Greek philosophical schools.


60. Alpha privatives, such as the two words in 1 Cor 15:53, or words that may be alpha privatives (as in 2 Cor 4:18), always catch my eye. If Paul were Philo, would he have written the antitheses of 2 Cor 4:18 in such a way as to include *aorata* (a word that he uses in Rom 1:20; see later Col 1:15–16)?


62. Except in Sanders, “Covenant as a Soteriological Category.”


65. Lieberman, ed., *Tosefta*, and Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Feshutah* (13 vols.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955–1988). Whenever I faced a really difficult passage, I prayed that it would have a parallel somewhere in the first three orders of the *Tosefta*, since in that case Lieberman would have explained it. The most essential volumes for work on the rabbis were the superb concordances published by members of the Kasovsky family; see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 564–65.

66. See n. 25.


74. Here I wish to mention some of my main debts to people who gave papers at the conference. I take them in chronological order: (1) During our long years at McMaster (1973–84), I learned many, many things from Al Baumgarten. I was able to make use of some of his articles in E. P. Sanders, “The Dead Sea Sect and Other Jews: Commonalities, Overlaps and Differences,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context* (ed. Timothy H. Lim; with Larry W. Hurtado et al.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 7–43. Unfortunately, Baumgarten’s masterful book on the sects, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (SupJSJ 55; Leiden: Brill, 1997), was not available when I wrote *P&B*. (2) While I was working on *J&J*, Seán Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian: 323 B.C.E. to 235 C.E.* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980; repr., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), allowed me not to spend time and pages on Galilee. Now that Galilee has become a contentious issue, my support for Freyne is indicated in “Jesus’ Galilee” (see n. 52) and in E. P. Sanders, “Jesus’ Relation to Sepphoris,” in *Sephoris in Galilee: Crosscurrents of Culture* (ed. Rebecca Martin Nagy et al.; Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1996), 75–79. (3) While we were writing books on Paul and the law, Heikki Räisänen and I exchanged manuscripts; see H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (2nd ed.; WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987). This benefited me enormously. (4) M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish War against Rome, A.D. 66–70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), and M. Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132–212* (Totawa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), were of appreciable use when I was writing *JLJM* and *P&B*. (5) My article on “Jesus’ Galilee” was greatly improved thanks to my association with Eric Meyers, partly because we jointly supervised the dissertation of Mark
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Chancey (The Myth of a Gentile Galilee [SNTSMS 118; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002]), partly by frequent contact with him, and partly by his publications, both articles and edited books. See "Jesus' Galilee," nn. 1, 3, 6, 10, 64, 83. (6) Peter Richardson, Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans (Personalities of the New Testament; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), was very helpful while I was writing "Jesus' Galilee." I wish it had been available during the composition of P&b. Perhaps I may add that, were I ever to write again on Jesus or Paul, the works of most of the other scholars whose essays appear here would be strongly represented.