

Preface

Three of the studies collected here were written on the way to completing what I hope will be a fairly short book on Jewish practice and belief—with the emphasis on practice—in the early Roman period (63 BCE to 66 CE). Some topics—pharisaic oral traditions (ch. II), pharisaic purity laws (ch. III), and various aspects of Diaspora *praxis* (ch. IV)—required extended presentation of the primary evidence, since my views diverge rather sharply from those which currently prevail. I argue that the special pharisaic traditions did not have the same status as the written law, that the Pharisees did not eat ordinary food in priestly purity, and that in the Diaspora Jews went their own way with regard to food, purity and donations to the temple, rather than basing their behaviour on Palestinian rules. Their food laws were their own, their purity practices were distinctive, and their gifts to the temple were determined by their own reading of the scriptures in Greek.

The first study, ‘The Synoptic Jesus and the Law’, serves two functions. It surveys the passages on the Jewish law in the synoptic gospels which I did not discuss in detail in *Jesus and Judaism* (1985) and demonstrates that my earlier conclusions stand even if one accepts many more passages as ‘authentic’. I have expanded the essay so that it will also serve as a primary introduction to numerous legal topics, many of which are taken up in greater detail in chs II–IV.

Chapters II and III deal extensively with two aspects of the work of Jacob Neusner. Chapter V, on his view of the ‘philosophy’ of the

Mishnah, rounds off an assessment of his major proposals of the 1970s and early 1980s. Critical evaluation of Neusner's work is not abundant, for perfectly understandable reasons, among which are the volume and scope of his publications. It has taken me some years to decide just what to make of his work on the Pharisees and the Mishnah, and I hope that my assessment, though belated, will be of interest to other scholars. The importance of the topics demands careful study of his methods and conclusions.

The nature of the volume has required more repetitions than are aesthetically pleasing. Some of these arise from the overlap of ch. I with more detailed analyses in later chapters. In other cases, I have thought it useful to repeat explanations so that the studies need not be read in the order in which they are presented. I have given what I hope are adequate cross-references to indicate where the most thorough discussion of a given point may be found. The Index of Subjects can be used to supplement the cross-references.

None of these studies has been previously published. The original, much shorter version of 'The Synoptic Jesus and the Law' was given as the Manson Memorial Lecture at Manchester University in November 1987. It also served as the basis for papers or lectures at Cambridge University, Sheffield University, and Saint David's University College, Lampeter. Parts of chs III and V were read as a paper at an Oxford seminar sponsored by Geza Vermes. An earlier version of ch. IV.B (purity in the Diaspora) was presented at a seminar at the University of London which was sponsored by Judith Lieu and John North, and also at the Oxford Seminar on Religion in the Graeco-Roman World. Chapter IV.D (offerings to the Jerusalem temple from the Greek-speaking Diaspora) was given as a lecture at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, at the invitation of Moshe David Herr. I am very grateful to those who made these opportunities available, and also to the numerous scholars who offered suggestions, most of which I have incorporated in some way or other. Several scholars did research on my behalf. I am especially indebted to Angus Bowie (Greek sacrifice), W. E. H. Cockle

and Peter Parsons (offerings from the Diaspora), and Chaim Milikowsky (tithes).

In April 1989, I examined the remains of several synagogues and many more immersion pools in Israel. For advice on what to see and with whom, I am grateful to Lee I. Levine, and for on-site explanations to Meir Ben-Dov, Hanan Eshel, Tzvi Ma'oz, Mary June Nestler and Ronny Reich. Their generosity went far beyond the normal bounds of scholarly assistance.

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