

Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century: Pivotal Essays by E. A. Judge. Edited by David M. Scholer. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008, 227 pp., \$24.95, paper.

Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century is a collection of important essays written over the last forty-eight years by E. A. Judge. It provides NT researchers with insight into the social identity of the early Christ-movement. David Scholer in the introduction understands Judge as “the new founder of social-scientific criticism of the New Testament,” but also recognizes that Judge rejects key developments within the field with regard to social determinism and the imposition of sociological models (p. xiv). Scholer is to be commended for doing a vital service for researchers of the early Christ-movement by gathering in one place Judge’s research which is often difficult to access. The result is that these foundational articles are available to a new generation of researchers who will find stimulating analysis and probative examples of inter-disciplinary research between classical and biblical studies. Judge’s command of Greco-Roman sources and his interest in social history combine to provide a convincing description of communal life within the early Christ-movement.

Chapter 1, “The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century,” concludes that the NT documents provide no systematic teaching on the social life of the early Christ-followers. Judge employs the Acts of the Apostles as his framework; however, he fails to recognize the continued role of Jewish identity in the formation of the early Christ-movement. Chapter 2, “Paul’s Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice,” emphasizes the importance of rhetoric in the development of cultural identity in antiquity. Chapter 3, “St. Paul and Classical Society,” argues that understanding “the complex civil obligations and expectations under which Paul and his converts lived” is vital to uncovering their social identity and Paul’s theologizing (p. 83). In chapter 4, “St. Paul as a Radical Critic of Society,” Paul is understood as a Roman citizen who was well educated and part of the mainstream of society but who also rejected the prevailing Greco-Roman approach to “self-protection” and “status” (p. 105). Chapter 5, “The Social Identity of the First Christians,” reviews the “new consensus” (p. 125) concerning the social identity of the early Christ-movement as representing a cross-section of Roman society. Chapter 6, “Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St. Paul,” reveals Judge’s command of the papyrological evidence and serves as a fine model for researchers to follow when working with the fragmentary evidence from Oxyrhynchus. Chapter 7, “Cultural Conformity and Innovation in Paul,” surveys key “eulogistic terminology” (p. 166) to explain Paul’s attitude toward money while in Corinth and the absence of friendship language in Paul’s letters. He also convincingly argues that Paul rejected the patronage system while in Corinth (p. 173). In chapter 8, “The Teacher as Moral Exemplar in Paul and in the Inscriptions of Ephesus,” relies on inscriptional evidence to understand how Paul’s call for imitation functioned. It was not to be understood as a call to imitate an educational model or an ethical system but as the cultivation of a “kindred practice” within his communities (p. 185). Scholer concludes with a comprehensive bibliography of Judge’s work and three useful indices including modern authors, subjects, and ancient sources. The book is free from typographical errors but tends to be disjointed, which often occurs in compilations.

In a short review such as this there is only space for one critique of Judge’s work. His approach to understanding the social distinctives and context of the earliest Christ-movement relies on papyrological, textual, and inscriptional evidence while dismissing a significant explanatory role for contemporary social-scientific models.

He argues that these models were developed much later and in a context foreign to that of the Roman Empire (p. 140). He argues that NT scholars should resist using the results of “modern sociology” until their findings can be validated through a type of “painstaking field work” that is all but impossible when dealing with ancient cultures. He concludes that those who employ these methods are engaging in “the sociological fallacy” (p. 128). Judge, however, employs the resources of “cultural-anthropology” to explain Paul’s engagement with the economic realities of the Roman Empire (pp. 166–67). His rejection of social-scientific theories as an explanatory device may not be as absolute as he presents in his writing. Scholer does, however, balance the discussion in the introduction by providing a summary of these issues and a bibliography for further research (pp. xvii–xx). David Horrell (cf. p. xviii) has argued that the imposition of models on ancient data is only one approach that may be employed within social-scientific criticism. One may engage in historical and textual work as practiced by Judge and then allow themes to emerge that may then be correlated with the findings from the social sciences. This inter-disciplinary work provides the conceptual resources that assist scholars in their efforts to address the concerns of contemporary society. This critique aside, this book is recommended for those interested in the social history of the earliest Christ-movement in its Greco-Roman context.

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The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah. By Walter Brueggemann. Old Testament Theology, eds. Brent A. Strawn and Patrick D. Miller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 213 pp., \$18.99, paper.

This work introduces a new series from Cambridge University Press on the theological message of individual books of the Old Testament. Walter Brueggemann is William Marcellus McPheeters Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary and is one of the most prolific OT scholars of our time. His earlier works include *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (1998), extensive writings on the prophetic literature, and his magnum opus *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (1997). The present work was released almost simultaneously with his collection of essays on the book of Jeremiah, *Like Fire in the Bones: Listening for the Prophetic Word in Jeremiah* (Fortress, 2006).

Brueggemann’s theology of Jeremiah derives from a view of the book as a complex and “multivoiced effort to make theological sense” of the Babylonian exile and its implications for the future of Israel as Yahweh’s covenant people (p. 7). More than the words of a single prophet, the book reflects a stream of tradition emerging from the ministry of Jeremiah the prophet. The theological message of the book is not uniform, but rather is the product of an ongoing discussion between several competing theological voices that seek to interpret the Babylonian exile and chart the course for Israel’s future. The book of Jeremiah contains two primary waves of reflection. The first wave occurs before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC and reflects on the impending loss of the city. The second wave arises from the community of the deported and makes clear that loss and destruction is not the final word for God’s people. This stream of tradition continues into the Persian period of the sixth century and ultimately “offers a powerful statement of hope that would have been impossible for the person of Jeremiah himself” (p. 9). In the aftermath of exile, the presence of competing theological voices is due in large part to the varying perspectives of the three Jewish communities in Judah, Egypt, and Babylon. In the Jeremiah tradition,



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