

## Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century: Pivotal Essays by E. A. Judge

David M. Scholer

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This is a collection of pivotal essays by E. A. Judge, who initiated many important discussions in the establishment of social scientific criticism of the Bible.

What is it that made the work of Judge in 1960 and in subsequent years so important? Judge was the first in scholarship after the mid-twentieth century to clarify early Christian ideals about society by defining what the social institutions of the broader cultural context were and how they influenced the social institutions of the early Christian communities. Judge points out that earlier scholars had entered into this field of inquiry, but that, in general, they failed due to the lack of careful definitions of the Greco-Roman social institutions at the time based on a thorough use of the primary sources.

Thus, Judge was the "new founder" (a turning point in scholarship) of what came to be called social-scientific criticism of the New Testament. Social-scientific criticism is the term in scholarship that refers to the use of social realities (e.g. institutions, class, factors of community organization) in the critical study of literary sources available (this is an advance over "merely" literary and traditional historical questions).



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