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Francis Watson

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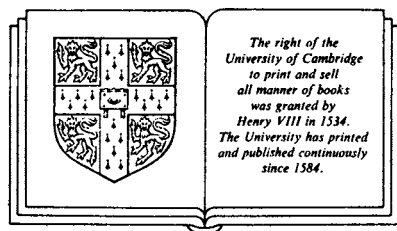
PAUL, JUDAISM AND THE GENTILES

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

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PREFACE

The present work has grown out of a doctoral thesis which was accepted by the Faculty of Theology in the University of Oxford in January 1984. The thesis was prepared under the supervision of the late Professor G.B. Caird, who patiently watched and assisted its rather wayward progress over a period of five years. Mr Robert Morgan too was a source of much encouragement and many helpful suggestions. However, the thesis has been very thoroughly rewritten from the standpoint of a much more rigorous historical and sociological perspective. The aim is to demonstrate from this perspective that the view of Paul's controversy with Judaism and Jewish Christianity which derives from the Reformation is seriously misleading, and that the Pauline texts become much more readily comprehensible when one abandons this overtly theological approach.

It may be as well at the outset to explain the way in which I have tried to use sociological insights in the study of Paul. Much valuable recent work applying sociology to the New Testament has been interdisciplinary in nature. The methods and the terminology of professional sociologists are used, and accounts are given of their research into religious movements far removed from early Christianity. In this way, the New Testament is set against a very broad background. There is a great deal of merit in this approach; but the danger is that sociology will come to be regarded as an alien and exotic newcomer to traditional New Testament studies, rather than a natural and inevitable concomitant of the historical-critical method – which is what I take it to be. New Testament scholars have always been interested in the *Sitz im Leben* of a tradition or text – i.e. the social reality underlying a tradition or text. A sociological analysis of how sectarian groups work may enable one to reconstruct a *Sitz im Leben* with much greater clarity and precision, but as a natural extension of accepted historical method rather than as a radically new departure.

This sociological analysis takes as its starting-point the hypothesis

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that a text presupposes an existing social situation and is intended to function within that situation in ways not necessarily immediately apparent from the text itself. This is a working hypothesis, and not an *a priori* assumption that all theoretical statements *must* be socially determined. The application of this hypothesis will be much more fruitful with some texts than it is with others. In some cases, a writer may be writing in a genuinely theoretical manner without any significant relation to social realities; in other cases, lack of evidence may make it impossible to reconstruct the social realities underlying a text. Sociological analysis is not a satisfactory way of filling in the gaps in our historical knowledge. It is not a substitute for historical evidence, but a way of interpreting the evidence. It is the argument of the present work that such an approach to Paul's controversies with Judaism and Jewish Christianity sheds a great deal of unexpected light on familiar texts such as Galatians and Romans, and thus shows up serious shortcomings in the more traditional theologically-oriented approach.

I would like to thank Professor G. N. Stanton for the encouragement that he has given during the preparation of this work, and for accepting it for the SNTS monograph series.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BDF	F. Blass, R. Debrunner and R. W. Funk, <i>Greek Grammar of the New Testament</i>
BevTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholisch Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ET	English translation
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS	Festschrift
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int.</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>

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KEKNT	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LW	Luther's Works (ET St Louis)
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
<i>MTZ</i>	<i>Münchener theologische Zeitschrift</i>
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NLC	New London Commentaries
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	<i>Supplement to Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SB	H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i>
SBL Diss.	Society for Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series
SBM	Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
<i>StBib</i>	<i>Studia Biblica</i>
<i>StEv</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
StNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
<i>StTh</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Theologische Blätter</i>
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Alten und Neuen Testament
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>