

John M.G. Barclay

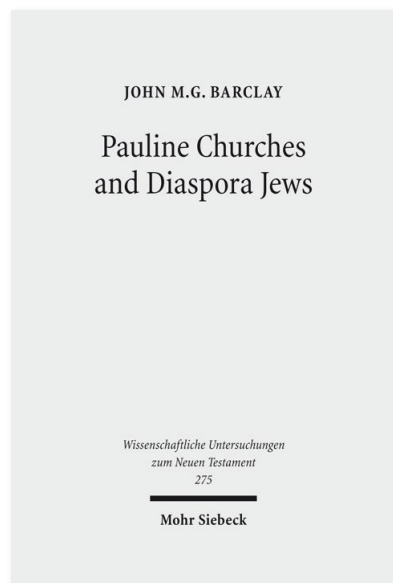
Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews

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The 'assemblies' founded by Paul in the cities of the Mediterranean world were in many respects comparable to the synagogues of Diaspora Jews which flourished in the same locations. The comparison illuminates many features in the social formation of the first Christians, a complex and variegated process that continued through many generations of early Christianity. In these seminal essays - some previously published, some newly written - John M.G. Barclay examines aspects of the construction of early Christian identity, especially within the Pauline tradition (during and after Paul's lifetime). Treating topics as diverse as food, family, money, circumcision, constitutional theory, and ethnic stereotypes, these essays place Christian communities in close comparison with Diaspora Judaism. Adopting a broader lens, placing both Jews and Christians in the larger context of the Roman world, there are ground-breaking studies of the social boundaries between Christians and outsiders, the formation of a Christian social dialect, and early Christian attitudes to old and young, to slavery, marriage, and death, to Roman religion and the Roman Empire. Early Christian identity is shown to have been fragile, contentious, often under-defined, socially creative, and multiple in expression: in their practices, their conventions, their social attitudes and their language, the Pauline churches emerge as sometimes conformist and sometimes radically innovative. These essays both model and stimulate a programme of socio-historical research that has much fresh light to shed on the formation of early Christianity.

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