

MICHAEL J. THATE

Remembrance of Things Past?

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

351

Mohr Siebeck

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351



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Remembrance of Things Past?

*Albert Schweitzer, the Anxiety of Influence,
and the Untidy Jesus of Markan Memory*

Mohr Siebeck

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For
Yia Yia Stella Boosalis
&
Granny Helen Thate[†]

Two of my strongest supporters and critics

Preface

The French poet and critic Paul Valéry (1871–1945) is credited with the revelation that poems are never finished, only abandoned. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, must be said of doctoral dissertations and academic monographs. This book is a slightly-less-abandoned version of my PhD thesis submitted to the Department of Religion and Theology at the University of Durham during the early summer months of 2012. Professor Francis Watson was my primary supervisor, whom I must thank for his able supervision and remarkable patience with this project. My secondary advisors, Dr Lutz Doering and the ever-resourceful Dr William R. Telford, proved useful sparring partners for early versions of the ideas represented in this volume. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Watson and Dr Telford for their reading and criticism of several documents that neither made their way into the thesis nor this monograph. My examiners, Prof. Gerard Loughlin and Dr AKMA Adam, convened a thrilling and searching *viva voce*, and to both of them I owe much gratitude. I also hasten to mention my thanks to Prof. John Barclay for talking through matters of my research and for his kind encouragement throughout the project. To Prof. Robert Hawyard, Dr Jane Heath, and Dr Wendy North, I must also thank for the many lunches, teas, and walks where much of what is now in print was first shared and discussed. Wendy kindly read Chapters 6 and 7, and offered helpful criticisms and timely encouragement. My debts to Prof. Douglas Davies are too many to list, so to the good Welshman I simply say: “ta.” His was a profound influence of which I am still recognizing. To the many great teachers from my past – Dr Paul K. Helseth, Dr Ardel B. Caneday, Dr Michael O. Wise, Dr Dennis R. Magary, Dr Richard Averbeck, Dr K. Lawson Younger, Dr David Pao, Dr Kevin Vanhoozer, Dr John Woodbridge, Dr Dana Harris, and to Dr D. A. Carson – I offer my sincerest thanks.

The ranging nature of this volume introduced me to many literatures beyond my competence and thus into a host of conversations with experts around the world in search for help. To corrupt the wisdom of the Mencius only slightly: in looking to history I found many friends (cf. Mencius 5B:8). Doctor James Carleton Paget (Cambridge) kindly read Part One and sent me several pre-published copies of his excellent work on Albert Schweitzer.

Doctor James Kelhoffer (Uppsala) and Prof. Jörg Frey (Zürich) both read the entire manuscript and made a host of helpful criticisms for which I am most grateful. Incidentally, I am grateful to Prof. Frey and Dr Henning Ziebritzki for accepting this work as part of their WUNT/II series, and to Mr Guangyao Un for his technical assistance in assembling the indexes and making ready the manuscript for publication. To Prof. Frederick Beiser (Syracuse) I must voice my deep appreciation for helping me think through Chapter 2. Frankly, I did not know enough to take on board all of his suggestions, but he sent me along many useful bibliographical trails. Doctor Robert Yarbrough (Covenant) kindly read early versions of my work on Reimarus. Professor Carl Holladay (Emory), Dr Stephen J. Davis (Yale), and Prof. Nils Ole Oermann (Leuphana) all generously sent pre-publication copies of their work and discussed them with me. I must also thank Dr Elizabeth Langstaff (Tübingen) and Prof. Hermann Lichtenberger (Tübingen) for their kind invitation and many demonstrations of hospitality toward me while at the English-German Colloquium in New Testament at Tübingen Universität in early July of 2011. Professor Richard Bauckham entertained my criticisms of him on two separate occasions, and Dr Dale Allison Jr – a true scholar and gentleman – read the completed dissertation version while making time to talk through a range of related topics. I must also express my thanks to Dean Greg Sterling of Yale Divinity School, Dr Paul F. Stuehrenberg (Yale), Prof. Adela Yarbro Collins (Yale), and Prof. Dale B. Martin (Yale) for their hospitality during my research fellowship at Yale.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the great friendships which provided much needed *divertissement* during the PhD process. To Dr William Bertsche, Bill Van Tuinen, Mark Pirrie, Steve Mason, Charles Butler, Dr Marika Rose, Dr Devin Singh, Dr Josh Jipp, the boys on the University of Durham American Football Team and the Ustinov Basketball Team, to Elo and Michael, and especially to Dr Dima Smayra, who became family to me while separated from my own (*shukran habibti*), I owe all my love and thanks.

I conclude by offering my deepest thanks to my parents and family. Being away from family proved particularly painful when news of Granny Helen's passing reached me. I offer this volume in honor of her memory and to my Yia Yia Stella Boosalis.

May 2013
New Haven, CT

Michael J. Thate

Table of Contents

Preface	VII
Chapter 1: <i>Entrer</i>	1
A. False Starts and Sweeping Narratives.....	1
B. Secularization and Its Forgotten Participants	3
1. The Physician of a Sick Century: Albert Schweitzer.....	6
2. Secularization and the Unfinished Project of <i>Leben-Jesu-Forschung</i>	11
C. Audre Lorde and the Challenge of Reception.....	14
1. Tacit Receptions	16
2. Schweitzer's Archival Function.....	18
3. The Anxiety of Influence	20
D. Outlining of Key Movements	21

Part One

Questioning the Influence(s) of Albert Schweitzer: Cultivating a Critical, Appreciative Distance

Chapter 2: A Wolf in Wolff's Clothing? The Quest for the Historical Reimarus.....	29
A. The Complexities of Historical Identity	29
B. The Public Reimarus.....	32
1. Reimarus and the Burden of Prestige	32
2. The Fate of Reason and the <i>Zeitgeist</i> of Reimarus	35
3. Reading Reimarus within the Wars of Reason	40
C. The Private Reimarus.....	42
1. From Halle to Wolfenbüttel: The Story of the <i>Fragmente</i>	46
2. Radical Conclusions: Wolff and the English Deists	49
3. On the Aims and Intentions of Reimarus: Reading the Final <i>Fragment</i>	54

D. Conclusions.....	60
 Chapter 3: A Man Who Needs an (re)Introduction: Contextualizing Schweitzer's <i>Leben</i> and <i>Denken</i>	
	63
A. A Man Who Needed No Introduction	63
1. The Effective Force of Albert Schweitzer	64
B. Re-Introducing Schweitzer: <i>Eine Skizze</i>	70
1. "I'm Not a Book!" Albert Schweitzer as a Man of Contradictions	71
2. The Winding Path from Alsace to Lambarene	73
3. Lambarene: An Outpost of the Kingdom of God	79
C. <i>Ethische Mystik</i> and Schweitzer's Search for Singularity	81
1. The Problem of Peace and Schweitzer's Frustrated Neo-Kantianism	81
2. Narratives of Decline	84
3. <i>Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben</i>	86
D. The Religious Significance of Jesus	89
E. Summary	94
 Chapter 4: A Spirit of Health or Goblin Damn'd? The Narrative Function of Reimarus within the <i>Geschichte</i>	
	95
A. Arbitrary Beginnings: Schweitzer's Construction of Reimarus	95
B. Schweitzer's Reimarus.....	102
1. Reimarus the Historian	104
2. Jesus, the Preacher of Repentance	106
3. The Fundamentally Eschatological <i>Weltanschauung</i> of Jesus	106
4. Christianity as the Fabrication of Jesus' Followers	109
C. Schweitzer's Critique and Rhetorical Strategy	111
1. Analysis and Valuation.....	112
2. Rhetorical Strategy	116
3. Dogmatic Agenda	119
D. Conclusion	123
 Chapter 5: Schweitzer's Key to All Mythologies: <i>konsequente Eschatologie</i>	
	125
A. The Key to All Mythologies	125
1. Dogmatic History and Actual History: Schweitzer's Hermeneutical Key	130

2. Schweitzer's Sources	132
3. Schweitzer's Method	134
B. The Preaching of Jesus.....	135
1. The Gift of the Imminent Kingdom.....	136
2. Making Ready for the Kingdom: Repentance	140
3. Making Ready for the Kingdom: <i>Interimsethik</i>	143
C. The Performance of Jesus.....	152
1. The Commissioning of the Twelve.....	154
2. Healings and Exorcisms.....	156
3. The Victorious Funeral Procession.....	158
D. The Complexities of Messiahship	160
1. Jesus' Relationship to the Baptist	161
2. The Secret of Jesus' Messianic Consciousness	163
3. The Secret of the Son of Man	174
E. <i>Jetzt und Dann</i> : Putting Eschatology Back Together Again.....	176

Part Two Moving House

Chapter 6: Forgetting Schweitzer and Remembering Jesus: The Role of Memory in Communal Identity and Formation 183

A. Mapping a New Way	183
B. A Walk Down Memory Lane: Theory of Promise or More of the Same?.....	187
1. Locating and Defining Memory Studies.....	189
2. Suspicions and Cautions of the Use of Memory Theory	195
3. Appropriations and Alterations of Memory Theory for this Research.....	198
C. Examples of Use in Similar Studies.....	209
1. The Jesus of Recurrent Attestation: Dale Allison Jr.....	212
2. The Jesus of Eyewitness Testimony: Richard Bauckham	219
3. The Jesus of Reception: Jens Schröter.....	226
D. Concluding Reflections on the Potential Benefits of this Approach	237
1. A Proper Problematization of the Quest	237
2. Widening the Sphere of Investigation.....	240
3. Theological Resonances.....	242

Chapter 7: The Untidy Jesus of Markan Memory.....	247
A. Putting Theory to Work.....	247
1. Communal Formation and Refraction.....	249
2. The Political Shape of Memory.....	257
3. The Singular Subject in Pluralistic Perspective.....	260
B. Christic Community and Ritual Christ.....	262
1. Ritual and <i>lieu(x) de mémoire</i>	264
2. The Sociolinguistic Location of Christ and Community.....	265
3. Communal Direction.....	269
C. Jesus in Pluralistic Perspective.....	272
1. Jesus as Teacher.....	273
2. Jesus as Healer.....	277
3. Jesus as Martyr.....	281
D. Conclusion.....	288
 Chapter 8: Negativity – Possibility: And Other Concluding Re-Introductions.....	 291
A. Negativity.....	291
B. Possibility.....	294
1. A Project of Re-Reception.....	297
2. <i>Leben-Jesu-Forschung</i> : A Social Historical Project.....	298
3. A Paradox which Cannot Be Named, but Must!.....	301
 Bibliography.....	 303
 Index of Ancient Sources.....	 357
A. Hebrew Bible and Septuagint.....	357
B. New Testament.....	358
C. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.....	361
D. Other Greek and Latin Sources.....	362
Index of Modern Authors.....	363
Index of Subjects.....	373

Chapter 1

Entrer

The study of the Life of Jesus has had a curious history.
Albert Schweitzer¹

History exists only from out of a present.
Martin Heidegger²

A. False Starts and Sweeping Narratives

Though often overlooked in analyses of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, the later Wittgenstein voices a deep anxiety in his *Vorwort* on how best to communicate the “Niederschlag philosophischer Untersuchungen” which has kept him occupied in his thinking from the period 1929–45. Wittgenstein returns to the imagery of his architectural interests – referring to himself as “eines schwachen Zeichners” – in order to sound his struggles against limitation in the construction of space and form.³ The architectonics of writing, of narrative, introduce a real negation; a limit which can create unknown and unintended consequences with respect to the communication and reception of the work once the author *lets go*. Wittgenstein continues: “daß meine Gedanken bald erlahmten, wenn ich versuchte, sie, gegen ihre

¹ “Es ist der Leben-Jesu-Forschung merkwürdig ergangen.” Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: A. & C. Black, 1910) 399; Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, p. 397. In what follows much of the quotations from Schweitzer’s *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* will be cited as *Geschichte*^{1/2} depending on the edition which is being cited and quotations from *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* as *Quest*^{1/2} depending on the edition being cited from the English translation.

² Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004 [1920–21]) 89.

³ On Wittgenstein and architecture, see August Sarnitz, *Architektur Wittgensteins: Rekonstruktion einer gebauten Idee* (Wien: Böhlau, 2011); Nana Last, *Wittgenstein’s House: Language, Space, & Architecture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Roger Paden, *Mysticism and Architecture: Wittgenstein and the Meanings of the Palais Stonborough* (Lanham: Lexington, 2007); Paul Wijdeveld, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Architect* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993); and, Dennis Young, ed., *Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Documentation with Excerpts from the Family Recollections by Hermine Wittgenstein* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1973).

natürliche Neigung, in *einer* Richtung weiterzuzwingen.” He therefore resolves to present a series of *Landschaftsskizzen*, concluding: “So ist also dieses Buch eigentlich nur ein Album.”⁴

If possible, this “book” would have been best presented in a manner akin to Wittgenstein’s *Bemerkungen*. The felt anxiety of form and narration is particularly acute in this work as its arguments are no singular thing. There is a kind of violence which the binding of pages effects upon the intended multiplicity now bound here. Moreover, to name or label or classify the work would be to negate its sprawling strategies. “Etwas benennen, das ist etwas Ähnliches, wie einem Ding ein Namentäfelchen anheften.”⁵ The following pages proceed along several axes while attempting both to make fragile and contribute to several discourses. Though in the guise of the historical-Jesus genre, this volume is more of an experimental critique in reception criticism and a test case of varying critical theories.⁶ Many have voiced criticisms – some more charitably than others – that the “presentations of the historical Jesus remain historiographically and hermeneutically naïve.”⁷ The hope of this volume is that it might not only introduce added rigor to discussions of the historical Jesus on matters of historiography and hermeneutics, but also with respect to its own sense of self – its genealogy. More broadly, and indeed, obliquely, there is an attempt to (re)situate the *historische Jesus-Frage* within wider discussions of secularization.⁸

⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text, with a Revised English Translation* (trans. G. E. M. Anscombe; Oxford Blackwell, 2001 [1953]) i.

⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 7.

⁶ Reception history gained momentum in the late 1960s in the field of literary theory through the development of Hans Robert Jauss. See, e.g., Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, eds., *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2000) 1–74; Robert C. Holub, *New Accents: Reception Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002); Robert C. Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); and, David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series 107; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008).

⁷ See the Editors’ Introduction in H. Moxnes, W. Blanton, and J. G. Crossley, eds., *Jesus Beyond Nationalism: Constructing the Historical Jesus in a Period of Cultural Complexity* (London: Equinox, 2009) 2.

⁸ One therefore hears the round rejection of the sensible counsel of Albert Schweitzer – perhaps the starring role of this volume (hero or villain?) – to Edwin Mellon: “don’t write a pretentious doctoral thesis! Take a limited subject that won’t require vast amounts of research,” and do “just enough to get your degree.” See Albert Schweitzer, *Brothers in Spirit: The Correspondence of Albert Schweitzer and William Larimer Mellon Jr* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996) 7.

B. Secularization and Its Forgotten Participants

Theories of secularization are of course complex and ranging.⁹ Some stress the supply-side or a religious economics approach,¹⁰ others offer decline narratives of religious institutional authority,¹¹ and still others stress cultural and symbolic structures as the locus of secularization.¹² Along this spectrum are any number of mediating positions which strive for greater nuance and complexity,¹³ and historicization.¹⁴ The movements operative in what follows

⁹ See Phil S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State and Society in Late Medieval an Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700," *American Sociological Review* 65 (2000) 138–67; Olivier Tschannen, "La genèse de l'approche moderne de la sécularisation: une analyse en histoire de la sociologie," *Soc. Compass* 39 (1992) 291–308; Olivier Tschannen, *Les Théories de la Sécularisation* (Genève: Droz, 1992); David Yamane, "Secularization on Trial: In Defense of a Neosecularization Paradigm," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (1997) 109–22.

¹⁰ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Roger Finke and Rondey Stark, "Religious Choice and Competition," *American Sociological Review* 63 (1998) 761–66. Many have responded that this position is an oversimplification of secularization theories: see, e.g., Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State and Society in Late Medieval an Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700," pp. 138–67; Phil S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: A Program for Research," in *Handbook for the Sociology of Religion* (ed. Michele Dillon; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 110–22; Frank J. Lechner, "The Case against Secularization: A Rebuttal," *Soc. Forces* 69 (1991) 1103–19; and Yamane, "Secularization on Trial."

¹¹ See, especially, Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Soc. Forces* 72 (1994) 749–74.

¹² See Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Marcel Gauchet, *La Religion dans la Démocratie: Parcours de la Laïcité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); Luc Ferry and Marcel Gauchet, *Le Religieux Après la Religion* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2004); cf. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983); and Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (London: Routledge, 1953).

¹³ See Karel Dobbelaere, "Theories of Secularization," *Curr. Sociol.* 29 (1981) 15–30; Karel Dobbelaere, "Towards an Integrated Perspective of the Processes Related to the Descriptive Concept of Secularization," *Sociology of Religion* 60 (1999) 229–47; José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1994); José Casanova, "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective," *Hedgehog Review* 8 (2006) 7–22.

¹⁴ Steve Bruce, *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); note, too, the studies of Hans Blumenberg, *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung* (Frankfurt Suhrkamp, 1974); Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*; Hartmut Lehmann, *Säkularisierung: Der europäische Sonderweg in Sachen Religion* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004); Hermann Lübke, *Säkularisierung: Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs* (3d ed.; Freiburg and Munich: Verlag Karl Alber Freiburg, 2003);

are not necessarily directed at entering into secularization debates as they are to demonstrate how key discourses within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regarding reason and revelation, the historical-critical method, and the rise of *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* were significant moments within this complicated tale.¹⁵ What is more, our continued discourses on such matters in the present day are our performances of these debates, our production of source material for future social historians to theorize about the social imaginaries operative in our time. The present work thinks through (and “with”) *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* and its complicated packaging of these debates. As evidenced by the figures under investigation in Part One – Reimarus and especially Schweitzer – the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were populated by biblical scholars who knew their philosophy and philosophers who knew their bibles.¹⁶ Questions of so-called Christian origins and the historical Jesus were inquiries through which a rising modernity explicated its fledgling identity.¹⁷

and, Giacomo Marramao, “Säkularisierung,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer; Basel: Schwabe, 1998) 8.1133–61.

¹⁵ See, especially, Michael Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Scott W. Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture, 1300–1700* (New York: Crossroads, 2013); Travis L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible* (London: T & T Clark Publishers, 2007); Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon, 1958 [1906]); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (trans. Talcott Parsons; New York: Routledge Classics, 2001); and Jean-Claude Monod, *La Querelle de la Sécularisation: Théologie Politique et Philosophies de l'Histoire de Hegel à Blumenberg* (Paris: Vrin, 2002).

¹⁶ This is *not* to say that this was not the case prior to the eighteenth century or even to engage in any sort of historical periodization analysis. Philosophical and epistemological commitments are hopelessly entwined with any historical project. The focus here on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is merely one of emphasis. Cf. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, p. 8. See, too, Luigi Salvatorelli, “From Locke to Reitzenstein: The Historical Investigation of the Origins of Christianity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 22.4 (1929) 263–369.

¹⁷ Here again it must be stressed that secularism can mean different things within different settings. Moreover, modernity – in all its guises – does not come cleanly all at once. Spaces of modernity and “non-modernity” can occupy spaces within the other. See, Andrew F. March, “Theocrats Living under Secular Law: An External Engagement with Islamic Legal Theory,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 19.1 (2011) 28–51. Consider, too, the 1976 amendment to the constitution in India which “made” India a secular country; or the declaration of Turkey as a secular country in 1928. Cf. Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History, 1890–1950* (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 2008); Sanjeev Tare, *Secular India: A Historical Quest* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991); Ira

As Ward Blanton has eloquently argued, “historical reconstructions of earliest Christianity have frequently functioned to exemplify some imagined fundamental aspect of philosophical rationality.”¹⁸ *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, therefore, proves a fruitful locus with which to engage in comparative sociologies of rationality. The staked claims and guarantees of efficacy within discourses on early Christian origins and the historical Jesus were the contested fields where the “respective epistemic techniques” of secularization as well as the rivaling “disciplinary specializations” during this period took place.¹⁹ Displaced between the theories of rationality carried out in discourses on philosophy and history is where the “energetic drama of the modern discourse of Christian origins” gets staged.²⁰ A staging whose scenery is colored by the agonistic posturing between philosophy and the rise of New Testament studies “to secure a kind of disciplinary ownership of the early Christian legacy by declaring its own realm of thinking to promise a superior mode of access to primordial or original Christianity.”²¹ This is what Derrida has termed processes of “outbidding.”²² The attempts to abstract from positive religion and move toward “pure” religion are informed by theories of rationality where theorists attempt to present their constructions as a kind of “purified” or “originary” account of the traditions they are problematizing.²³ These processes of “outbidding” concern themselves with who are the better managers and what is the better guarantee of the fragile limits between the “religious” and the “secular”; between reason and revelation; between positive and pure.

Wittgenstein wagers that in most cases, “die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache.”²⁴ *Sprache* here may be widened to notions of the social imaginary.²⁵ In this case, the phrase “historical Jesus” means different things within different social imaginaries. It is the adjective which

Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds., *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds., *Secularisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

¹⁸ Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 4.

¹⁹ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 4.

²⁰ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 5.

²¹ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 5.

²² Jacques Derrida, “The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in *Religion* (ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 1–78. Cf. Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 167.

²³ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 8.

²⁴ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 20.

²⁵ On the phrase “social imaginary,” see Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) 23; and, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007) 159–211.

shape-shifts the proper noun into a thousand variations of itself as it introduces a multiplicity of *Kalkül der Wahrheitsfunktionen*.²⁶ History thus becomes idealized. “Das Ideal, in unsern Gedanken, sitzt unverrückbar fest. [...] Die Idee sitzt gleichsam als Brille auf unsrer Nase, und was wir ansehen, sehen wir durch sie.”²⁷ Wittgenstein’s eye-glasses effect naturalizing postures and historicized rationalities.²⁸ This is what Alfred Schutz calls the “natural attitude,” where one “puts in brackets of doubt that the world and its objects might be otherwise than it appears.”²⁹ History-as-Ideal – particularly as it works itself out in processes of outbidding within the spheres of Christian origins and *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* – therefore, presents a valuable space wherein to theorize about “natural attitudes.”³⁰ The ranging depictions and constructions of early Christianity by modernity in all its guises – or contemporary constructions as well – thus “must be read as a working through of its own identity.”³¹

1. *The Physician of a Sick Century: Albert Schweitzer*

In this respect Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) proves a remarkable transitional figure within discussions of secularization through his *fin-de-siècle* cultural analysis. Though perhaps Schweitzer’s writings on Jesus rank amongst the most influential and well-known texts within biblical scholarship in the English-speaking world, their familiarity has bred a peculiar ignorance. “Those who would find in Schweitzer a mere advance in historical correctness over against previous scholarship will necessarily miss the shared traffic elucidated here between Schweitzer’s philosophical critiques of modernity and his discovery, at the end of the ‘modern’ and ‘liberal’ period of

²⁶ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 52.

²⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 45.

²⁸ Cf. D. L. d’Avray, *Rationalities in History: A Weberian Essay in Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁹ I owe this reference to Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011) xv.

³⁰ Worth comparing are the excellent related works of Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Roland Boer, ed., *Secularism and Biblical Studies* (London: Equinox, 2010); Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Tomoko Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origin of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Tomoko Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³¹ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 7.

scholarship, of an ‘eschatological’ Jesus.”³² Schweitzer’s work on Jesus – and Paul for that matter – cannot be read in isolation. His *Kulturphilosophie*, for example, stands “in isomorphic relationship” with his criticisms in *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*. Though the former was not published until 1923, it was a topic of research-in-germ from Schweitzer’s early studies on Kant in 1899.³³ Where Schweitzer the “biblical critic” begins and Schweitzer the “philosopher” ends is thus difficult to distinguish. “Both types of study were being thought about and produced during the same period.”³⁴

Leben-Jesu-Forschung was one of the many stages in which modernity’s “own cultural undecidabilities” were being played out.³⁵ Whereas the early David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874), for example, was laboring to “produce secularizing effects” by “inventing a specifically ‘modern’ cultural and academic identity,”³⁶ Schweitzer attempted a “sublimely violent reorientation of basic cultural coordinates.”³⁷ What the reception of Schweitzer within biblical scholarship has missed is that his project was not simply a condemnation of modern theology’s constructions and designs, but a subversion of “an entire modern epoch of ‘constructivist’ thought and metaphysical design *in general*.”³⁸ Schweitzer’s “discovery” of eschatology as the key which turns the lock of the secrets of the historical Jesus appears “hand in hand with his philosophical and cultural diagnoses of the collapse of an epoch he called, alternately, ‘modern,’ ‘rational,’ and ‘liberal’ thought.”³⁹ It is within the collapse of this epoch – viz., twentieth-century German liberalism – where possible eruptions of “new forms of cultural life and energy” manifest themselves.⁴⁰ As will be suggested in Chapter 3 of this volume, Schweitzer’s work on Jesus, Paul, Kant, Bach, Goethe and his wider philosophical and ethical work are all guided by a similar movement toward “an eruption of a previously unrecognizable force that sounds the death knell of the modern form of thought from which it emerges, now, in the very

³² Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 76.

³³ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 130.

³⁴ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 135; Blanton rightly warns against being caught up in Schweitzer’s rhetoric of history in *ibid.*, p. 203 n. 22.

³⁵ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 102.

³⁶ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 25; cf., generally, *ibid.*, pp. 67–103.

³⁷ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 11.

³⁸ Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, p. 156.

³⁹ Ward Blanton, “Albert Schweitzer’s Apocalyptic Jesus and the End of Modernity,” in *Jesus Beyond Nationalism: Constructing the Historical Jesus in a Period of Cultural Complexity* (ed. H. Moxnes, W. Blanton, and J. G. Crossley; London: Equinox, 2009) 57.

⁴⁰ Blanton, “Schweitzer’s Apocalyptic Jesus at the End of Modernity,” p. 57.

destruction of the modern mode of knowing.”⁴¹ The force which emerged from this rupture, as we shall see, is Schweitzer’s *ethische Mystik*.

The trouble with most scholarship on Schweitzer is that only individual aspects of his wider work are under consideration to the neglect of their complex interactions with the whole. For Schweitzer, his “life was his argument.”⁴² There is a “universality” to Schweitzer’s thought that rises above any provincial interest.⁴³ “Die Theologie Schweitzers bestimmte seine Ethik, die Zeit in Europa sein Bild von Afrika, und Afrika wiederum hat ihn selbst und sein Bild von Europa verändert.”⁴⁴ Lambarene, for instance, was no mere hospital for Schweitzer, but “de[r] Ausdruck seiner Lebens- und Weltanschauung.”⁴⁵ He saw it as an *Improvisation*; “als Versuch eines gelebten Ethos.”⁴⁶ Biblical scholarship tends to misread Schweitzer as one of their own. Schweitzer himself – in a note to his East German biographer, Rudolf Grabs – however, states that he wanted his life to be understood not in terms of his theology or historical scholarship, but above all *through his philosophy*.⁴⁷ What is more, he admits to a former student of his – Fritz Buri – that he considers himself to be an *Amateurphilosophen*.⁴⁸ Oermann has convincingly argued that, “Im Kern war und blieb Schweitzer sein Leben lang ein[r] Mystiker in dem Sinne, dass Mystik die Einheit von Gott und Mensch jenseits der Geschichte sucht.”⁴⁹ Schweitzer’s *Mystik* – his pursuit of a unity of God and humanity beyond history – was grounded in “eine[r] lebensbejahende[n] Überschreitung der Tatsachenwelt.”⁵⁰ It was through his *ethische Mystik* which Schweitzer labored to seek this unity of God and the human soul in the everyday.⁵¹ Jesus, Paul, Bach, Goethe, *et. al.*, were thus

⁴¹ Blanton, “Schweitzer’s Apocalyptic Jesus at the End of Modernity,” p. 58.

⁴² James Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer: A Biography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000 [1976]) 507.

⁴³ See his letter to Helene in Rhena Schweitzer Miller and Gustav Woytt, eds., *Albert Schweitzer – Helene Bresslau: Die Jahre vor Lambarene. Briefe 1902–1912* (Munich: Beck, 1992) 110; cf., too, James Carleton Paget, “Albert Schweitzer: Theologians Revisited,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62.1 (2011) 113–31, here, p. 120.

⁴⁴ Nils Ole Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer, 1875–1965: Eine Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009) 11.

⁴⁵ Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 235.

⁴⁶ This quote is from an interview conducted by Oermann with Christiane Engel in Lambarene on 7 April 2009 and is cited in Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 312.

⁴⁷ See Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 38.

⁴⁸ See Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 61.

⁵¹ Oermann states that “Schweitzer verstand sich als theologischer Mystiker, der nach der Einheit von Gott und menschlicher Seele fragte.” See Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 67. There is an

resources with which Schweitzer attempted to explicate his evolving *ethische Mystik*.

Schweitzer as a “child of his time” in search for a new means of orientation,⁵² for “a new attitude towards the world,”⁵³ therefore provides a fascinating “field” of secularization and its complexities.⁵⁴ His working *within* modern forms of thought in order to introduce ruptures within these same forms is an intriguing case of where *les extrêmes se touchent*. Schweitzer recognized the threat posed by material life to spiritual life, and how “much that was being done recently for civilization and for culture must now be discontinued” if there is any hope for civilization and culture.⁵⁵ As he would write in 1950, “We are at the beginning of the end of the human race.” Humanity’s “only hope,” he would continue, “is that the Spirit of God will strive with the spirit of the world and will prevail.”⁵⁶ *God*, for Schweitzer is a “dynamic Power for good, a mysterious Will, distinct from the world and

interesting connection here between Schweitzer and Michel de Certeau, *Practice of the Everyday* (trans. Steven Rendall; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011 [1980]).

⁵² Cf. Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 311.

⁵³ Albert Schweitzer, “The Conception of the Kingdom of God in the Transformation of Eschatology: Epilogue by Albert Schweitzer,” in *The Theology of Albert Schweitzer for Christian Inquirers* (ed. E. N. Mozley; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950) 99.

⁵⁴ On secularization and its complexities, see, further, Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012); Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012); Thomas Luckmann, “Shrinking Transcendence, Expanding Religion?” *Sociological Analysis* 51.2 (1990) 127–38; Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868–1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Jonathan VanAntwerpen Michael Warner, and Craig Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Mark Juergensmeyer Craig Calhoun, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (New York: Polity, 2008); Jürgen Habermas, *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (New York: Polity, 2010); Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007); Phillip E. Hammond, ed., *Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); and, Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁵⁵ Charles R. Joy, ed., *Goethe: Four Studies by Albert Schweitzer* (Boston: Beacon, 1950). The quotation is taken from a speech given on 22 March 1932.

⁵⁶ Schweitzer, “Epilogue,” p. 107.

superior to the world.”⁵⁷ God is an “ethical Personality” – and this ethical Personality is in contrast and conflict with the world.⁵⁸ During the reception speech of his Nobel Peace Prize in 1954, Schweitzer stated that “Man has become a superman,” but that this superman “is impoverished, not enriched, by the increases in his powers” and living in a time of “unprecedented abasement of cultural values.”⁵⁹ Schweitzer, in a key passage, discusses Kant’s notion of the foundation of a Society of the Nations outlined in *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (1795).⁶⁰ According to Schweitzer, Kant founded his Society not on ethics but on law perfecting itself. Schweitzer strongly avers. “Ethics alone has this power.”⁶¹ The foundation for peace is not *law* perfecting itself but *ethics* perfecting itself. And it is only the human spirit *as a manifestation of the Spirit* that can accomplish the perfecting of ethics.⁶² Schweitzer thus in a manner far different than Kant, begins with “Alltagserfahrung” as the “Ausgangspunkt” of his thinking.⁶³ According to Schweitzer, “die Ethik hat materialistische Instinkte.”⁶⁴ And these sprawling articulations of *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* Schweitzer saw as his “primary contribution to the world.”⁶⁵

As Ward Blanton has been suggesting in a series of publications, Schweitzer’s work “is a remarkable piece of *fin-de-siècle* analysis.”⁶⁶ Well did *Revue* name him “Arzt eines kranken Jahrhunderts.”⁶⁷ Schweitzer’s work can be seen as an attempt to re-enchanted a disenchanted era with an *ethische Mystik* – an ethical mysticism this side of world negation. Jesus and *konsequente Eschatologie*, and his works on Paul, Goethe, and Bach, are therefore special instances of this larger cultural criticism guided by the

⁵⁷ Albert Schweitzer, *Christianity and the Religions of the World* (trans. Johanna Powers; New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1939 [1923]) 15–16.

⁵⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity* (trans. L. A. Garrard; New York: Seabury Press, 1966) 16.

⁵⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Problem of Peace in the World Today* (San Francisco: Harper & Brothers, 1954) 12. The lecture was given on 4 November 1954 but the actual Prize was awarded in 1952 while Schweitzer was in Lambarene.

⁶⁰ See Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” in *Kant: Political Writings* (ed. H. S. Reiss; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1795]) 93–130.

⁶¹ Schweitzer, *The Problem of Peace*, p. 15.

⁶² Schweitzer, *The Problem of Peace*, p. 19.

⁶³ Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 148.

⁶⁴ Albert Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik* (Munich: Beck, 1923) 110.

⁶⁵ Albert Schweitzer, *The African Sermons* (trans. Steven E. G. Melamed; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003) xix.

⁶⁶ Ward Blanton, “Biblical Scholarship in the Age of Bio-Power: Albert Schweitzer and the ‘Degenerate Physiology’ of the Historical Jesus,” *Bible and Critical Theory* 2.1 (2006) 06.1–06.25, p. 06.5.

⁶⁷ *Revue* 54 (13 November 1954), quoted in Oermann, *Schweitzer*, p. 243.

Index of Ancient Sources

A. Hebrew Bible and Septuagint

<i>Genesis</i>			
1:26-7	267	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
		1:1	266, 267
<i>Exodus</i>		1:3	267
4:22	268	8-11	266
26:31-35	268	38:12	216
		<i>Daniel</i>	133-5
<i>Leviticus</i>		3	287
16:2	268	6	287
26:14-46	266	<i>Hosea</i>	143
		11:1	268
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		<i>Joel</i>	
13:1-11 277		2:37	157, 161
28-30	266	<i>Amos</i>	143
<i>Psalms</i>		<i>Micah</i>	
14:7	140	4:1	216
18	268	4:7	60
53:6	140	<i>Habbakuk</i>	
74:9	266	3	268
144	268	<i>Zechariah</i>	
<i>Isaiah</i>	143	9:9	159
2:2	216	14:10	216
40:9	287	<i>Malachi</i>	
52:7	287	4:5	157, 161
52:13-53:12	288		
63:19	266		
63:11-64:1	267		
<i>Jeremiah</i>	143		
23:24	266		
31:9	268		

B. New Testament

<i>Matthew</i>		15:22-28	238
1-2	229	15:24	60, 216
1:1-17	163	16:13	175
3:1	141	16:13-17	238
3:11-12	162	16:13-20	168
3:13-17	165	16:28	109
3:16	266	19:28	55
5:18	106	21:1-11	159
6:13a	170	21:33-46	137
8:20	175	22:1-14	137
9:27-31	166	23	109
9:37-38	153	23:8	274
10:1-42	154	24:42-47	137
10:1	154, 157	25:1-13	137
10:5	110	25:14-30	137
10:6	216	26:36-46	168
10:7	55	26:57-68	161
10:5-6	60	28:19	59-60
10:16-25	154		
10:16-42	155	<i>Mark</i>	152, 227, 248, 258ff.
10:23	107-8, 154-5	1:2	267
10:26-33	154	1:4	141
10:27	137	1:9	270
10:34-39	154	1:9-11	165
11:2-19	155	1:10	265, 267, 270
11:12	141	1:11	267, 270-1
11:14-15	161	1:12	268
11:19	175	1:13	283
12:23	166	1:14	276, 287
12:25-28	158	1:15	276
12:28	157	1:16	221
12:32	175	1:21	274, 277, 280
12:40	175	1:21-28	279, 280
13:11	58	1:22	274, 280
13:38	175	1:24	166, 267
13:41	175	1:27	281
14:1-12	155	1:29	281
14:33	166	1:29-31	279
15:13-14	58	1:38	274
15:22	166		

1:39	274, 276	5:35-43	279
1:40-42	279	5:37	221
1:57	166	5:41-42	263
2:1-12	153	6:1-6	153
2:2	277	6:2	274, 277, 279
2:2-12	279	6:4	274, 281
2:7	269	6:5	279
2:13	276	6:6	277
2:15	274	6:6b-13	154
2:16	274	6:12-13	154
2:18	274	6:13	155
2:18-22	153	6:14-16	278, 284
2:20	262, 277, 282	6:14-29	154-5
2:23	274	6:17	263
2:23-28	153	6:30-44	155, 165
3:1-5	279	6:3-56	279
3:1-6	283	7:1-13	274, 276
3:6	153	7:2-4	263
3:7	274	7:14-16	276
3:9	274	7:17	281
3:10	279	7:17-23	276
3:11	166	7:19	263
3:17	221	7:25	279
3:20-22	153	7:31-37	279
3:23	277, 278	7:34	263
3:23-30	153	7:37	166
3:31-35	153	8:1-10	155
4:1	276	8:11	283
4:1-2	277	8:14ff	166
4:2	277	8:15	284
4:11	58, 136	8:22-26	279
4:17	269, 282	8:27-30	168
4:33-34	277	8:27-10:45	270
4:34	274	8:29	166
4:38	274	8:31	277, 282
5:1-20	279	8:31-33	270
5:19-20	263	8:31-34	277
5:21-24	279	8:34	276
5:21-43	281	8:34-37	269, 270
5:25-34	279	8:38	262
5:31	274	8:91	262
5:35	274	9:2-8	162

9:2-13	265	12:39	281
9:5	274	12:42	263
9:7	270-1	12:43	276
9:11	162	13:1	274, 276
9:14-29	279	13:1-37	262
9:17	274	13:5	277
9:28	281	13:9	281
9:30-31	277	13:9-13	285
9:30-32	270, 282	13:12-13	269
9:33	281	13:14	263
9:33-37	270, 275	13:24-37	288
9:38	274	14:9	263
10:1	274, 277	14:14	274
10:2	283	14:21	282
10:2-9	274	14:32-42	168
10:10	281	14:45	274
10:13-16	275	14:48	287
10:17-22	274	14:49	276-277
10:24	275	14:51-52	263
10:31	270	14:53	274
10:32-34	277, 282	14:53-65	285
10:33	282	14:62	262
10:33-34	270	14:65	274
10:35	274	14:66-72	274
10:35-45	270	15:3	268
10:37	55	15:7	287
10:39	269	15:11	287
10:42	276	15:16	263
10:45	159	15:21	263
10:46-52	229, 263, 279	15:32	287
10:51	274	15:34	263, 270
11:1-11	159	15:37	268
11:17	274, 276	15:38	265
11:21	274	15:39	271
12:1-12	172	15:42	263
12:13	274	16:5	270
12:13-17	283	16:6	270
12:15	283	16:7	221, 270-1
12:19	274	16:8	270-1
12:28-32	274	16:15	60
12:35	274, 276		
12:38	276, 283		

<i>Luke</i>		11:23	243
1-2	229	15:1-3	241
2:23-31	163		
3:21	266	<i>Galatians</i>	
6:39-40	58	1:9	241
8:10	58		
8:2-3	110	<i>Colossians</i>	
19:28-44	159	1:15	268
22:30	55	2:6	241
24:6	238		
24:21	55	<i>1 Thessalonians</i>	
		2:13	241
<i>John</i>		4:1	241
1:38	274		
3:2	274	<i>2 Thessalonians</i>	110
10:31	58	3:6	241
15:20	238		
16:3	238	<i>2 Timothy</i>	
20:16	274	2:8	244
<i>Acts</i>		<i>2 Peter</i>	110
7:22	278		
7:56	267	<i>Revelation</i>	142
10:11	267	4:11	267
		19:11	267
<i>1 Corinthians</i>			
11:2	241		

C. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

<i>Acts of Thomas</i>	217	<i>1 Enoch</i>	134-5
		26:1-3	216
<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>			
19:4	266	<i>4 Ezra</i>	133-5
<i>Baruch</i>	133-5	<i>Gospel of Peter</i>	235
<i>2 Baruch</i>		<i>Gospel of Mary</i>	235
22:1	266		
85:3	266		

Joseph and Aseneth
152 267

Jubilees
8:19 216

1 Maccabees
4:4 266
6:18 267
9:27 266
14:41 266

2 Maccabees
4:7-10:9 287

4 Maccabees 287

Psalms of Solomon 133-5, 142

Sibylline Oracles
5:251 216

Testament of Benjamin
2:2 266

Testament of Judah
22.2 268

Testament of Levi
2:6 266
5.2 268
18:6 266
34 58

Testament of Naphtali
8.3 268

Testament of Zebulun
9.8 268

D. Other Greek and Latin Sources

Athanasius
Easter Letter 235

Council of Laodecia 235

Eusebius
Historia Ecclesiae
3.39.3-4 221

Josephus
Against Apion
1.41 266

Jewish Antiquities 3.6.4
122-23 268

Pliny the Elder
Natural History
XXX.11 278
XXXV.65 301

Martyrdom of Polycarp 287

Shepherd of Hermas 142
1.1:4 266-7

Index of Modern Authors

- Abbott, H. Porter 99
Aberbach, Moshe 275
Achte-meier, Paul J. 208
Adinolfi, Marco 272
Agamben, Giorgio 13, 140, 285, 301
Ahlstrom, Sydney E. 149
Aland, Kurt 242
Albrecht, Michael 36
Alcock, Susan E. 193
Alexander, Gerhard 46, 61
Allison Jr, Dale C 19, 24, 70, 185, 197,
204, 212-218, 294, 298
Allison, Henry E. 48
Alter, Robert 240
Altmann, Alexander 42
Anderson, Benedict 192, 258
Ando, Clifford 257
Aner, Karl 36, 48
Antognazza, Maria Rosa 31, 52
Aronold-de Simine, Silke 209, 259, 264
Aschheim, Steven E. 150
Ashby, A. B. 91
Assmann, Aleida 188
Assmann, Jan 186, 188, 183-193, 202-3,
209, 214, 238, 240, 258-9
Attridge, Harold W. 254
Auden, W. H. 29
Audouy-naud, André 80
Aune, David 196, 236, 241, 262, 278
Ausmus, Harry J. 139
Ayles, Lewis 295
Baasland, Ernst 68
Bacon, Benjamin Wisner 132
Badiou, Alain 13-14, 140
Bähr, D. W. 97
Bailey, Daniel P. 288
Bailey, Kenneth E. 222
Bammel, Ernst 22, 139
Bauckham, Richard 24, 219-225, 226-7,
234
Bakhtin, Mikhail 100
Baldensperger, Wilhelm 128
Bann, Stephen 103
Bal, Mieke 99-101
Bambach, Charles R. 74
Bar-Ilan, Meir 207
Barber, Elinore 91
Barclay, John M. G. 254, 259
Baroni, Raphael 100
Barrett, Michèle 297
Barsam, Ara Paul 86
Barth, Karl 252, 267
Barthes, Roland 98
Bartlett, Frederic C. 204
Barton, Carlin A. 286
Barzun, Jacques 65
Bauckham, Richard 200, 219-225, 232
Baudelaire, Charles 266
Baum, A. D. 204
Baur, F. C. 75
Beck, Lewis White 34, 41, 48-9
Becker, Jürgen 261
Beilby, James K. 239, 260
Beiser, Frederick C. 4, 34-42, 47-9, 74-
76, 103
Bell, Catherine 265
Bell, Duncan S. A. 195-6, 201, 258-260
Bellah, Robert N. 6, 250
Benjamin, Walter 210
Berlin, George L. 120
Berman, Harold J. 295
Betz, Hans Dieter 59

- Bhabha, Homi K. 255
 Bianco, B. 32
 Bickerton, Derek 96-7
 Bird, Michael F. 210, 242
 Bikmen, Nida 197
 Bixler, J. Seelye 88, 150
 Black, C. Clifton 265
 Blackburn, David 31
 Blackwell, Richard 37
 Blake, William 292
 Blank, Reiner 201
 Blanton, Ward 5-8, 10-14, 16, 83-4, 87-91, 127, 178, 300-1
 Bloch, Marc 250
 Bloom, Harold 20, 248, 291
 Blount, Brian K. 249
 Blumenberg, Hans 3
 Bock, Darrell L. 293
 Bockmuehl, Markus 280
 Bodnar, John 203
 Boehart, William 32
 Bohak, Gideon 278
 Bolt, Peter G. 282
 Bonanno, George 238
 Bonhoeffer, Dietrich 299
 Borg, Marcus J. 18, 70
 Borinski, Ludwig 48
 Boswell, Laird 73
 Bourdieu, Pierre 296
 Bourke, J. 195
 Bower, Gordon H. 189
 Bowman, Alan K. 207
 Bowman, John W. 67
 Boyarin, Daniel 255
 Braaten, Carl E. 144
 Brabazon, James 8, 65, 70, 71, 74, 150
 Breytenbach, Cilliers 249
 Broadhead, Edwinn K. 241
 Brown, Colin 35, 41, 52, 54, 61, 112
 Bruce, Steve 3, 9
 Breuer, Edward 42
 Budde, Johann Franz 37
 Bultmann, Christoph 32
 Bultmann, Rudolf 133, 184, 199, 201
 Burguière, André 250
 Burrige, Richard 223, 249
 Büttner, W. 32
 Büsch, J.G. 35
 Byrskog, Samuel 183, 196, 200, 209, 220, 222
 Cameron, James 80
 Carboncini, Sonia 37
 Carlyle, Thomas 149
 Caron, Vicki 73
 Casanova, José 3
 Casey, Edward S. 204-5
 Cassirer, Ernst 36, 139, 192
 Castelli, Elizabeth A. 244
 Chancey, Mark A. 254
 Chapman, Mark D. 34, 66, 68, 141, 148-9, 176
 Charles, R.H. 20, 135, 149
 Charlesworth, James H. 69-70, 294
 Chartier, Roger 251
 Chaves, Mark 3
 Cheung, Tobias 40-1
 Childs, Brevard S. 243
 Chilton, Bruce 69-70, 238, 274-5
 Chladenius, Johann Martin 33-34
 Chronis, Harry L. 272
 Chubb, Thomas 53
 Cicovacki, Predrag 65
 Clark, Elizabeth A. 6, 25, 97, 210, 249-250-1, 253, 255, 272
 Coakley, Sarah 187
 Cohen, Gillian 204
 Cohen, Shaye J. D. 254
 Colani, Timothée 106
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 162
 Collins, Adela Yarbro 211, 256, 268, 272, 274
 Cook, Michael J. 283, 300
 Cousins, Norman 80
 Crenshaw, James L. 275

- Crossan, John Dominic 18, 204, 211, 277, 292
- d'Avray, D. L., 6
- Dahl, Nils 253-4
- Daniel, Stephen 53
- Danto, Arthur C. 259
- Davenport, Manuel M. 64
- Davies, Douglas J. 240
- Davis, Stephen J. 244
- Dawes, Gergory W. 184
- de Certeau, Michel 96, 251
- de Vries, Hent 140
- Deconick, April 211
- Deleuze, Gilles 100
- den Heyer, Cees 239, 293
- Derrida, Jacques, 5, 11, 12, 100, 240, 251, 255, 261, 266-7, 298
- Dibelius, Martin 199, 262
- Dickinson, Emily 29
- Dobbelaere, Karel 3
- Dibelius, Martin 199
- Dodd, C. H. 263
- Doering, Lutz 216
- Douglas, Kelly Brown 300
- Draaisma D. 189
- Drazin, Nathan 275
- Dreger, Alice Domurat 120
- Droysen, Gustav 229
- du Toit, David S. 16, 183
- Dungan, David 69
- Dunn, James D. G. 69-70, 185, 196, 207-8, 210, 232-3, 237, 239, 251, 293-5
- Ebner, Eliezer 275
- École, Jean 37
- Eck, Werner 256
- Eddy, Paul Rhodes 239, 260
- Egger, Wilhelm 263
- Ehlich, K. 203
- Eidman, Klaus 91
- Eley, Geoff 103
- Eliot, George 129
- Epp, Eldon J. 242
- Engert, Joseph 32
- Erdmann, Johann Eduard 37, 40
- Evans, Craig A. 253, 258, 262, 274, 279, 293
- Fastenrath, Elmar 128
- Faulkner, William 183
- Febvre, Lucien 250
- Feeney, Denis 259
- Feiner, Shmuel 42
- Fentress, James 190, 193
- Ferguson, Everett 285
- Ferry, Luc 3
- Finke, Roger 3
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler 15, 199, 233, 252, 269, 296-8
- Fish, Stanley 299
- Fishbane, Michael 269-270
- Flesher, Paul V. M. 275
- Fludernik, Monika 99
- Floss, Johannes P. 199
- Flusser, David 70
- Focant, Camille 256
- Foley, John Miles 207
- Fortier, Ted 192
- Foster, Stuart 299
- Foucault, Michel 96, 258, 296
- Frampton, Travis L. 4
- Freeden, Michael 259
- Frei, Hans W. 294
- Freyer, P. H. 80
- Freyne, Sean 253
- Frickenschmidt, Dirk 249
- Fried, Johannes 194, 237
- Friedriksen, Paula 70, 280
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg 103, 251, 294-5, 299
- Gager, John G. 278
- Gathercole, Simon J. 67, 111-2, 122-3, 272
- Gauchet, Marcel 3
- Gellner, Ernest 17
- Genette, Gérard 97, 100

- Gerhardson, Birger 200, 210
 Georgi, Dieter 232, 296
 Gerrish, B. A. 31, 38
 Ghillany, Friedrich Wilhelm 117
 Gilbert, Felix 103
 Gillespie, Michael 4
 Glasson, T. Francis 69
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 82, 85, 88,
 92
 Goeze, Johann Melchior 35, 47
 Goff, Matthew J. 217
 Goguel, Maurice 302
 Goldenbaum, Ursula 43-4
 Goodman, Martin 257, 283
 Gorman, David 99
 Gorski, Phil S. 3
 Gotthard, Axel 38
 Gould, Jeffrey L. 259
 Graf, Fritz 278
 Grant, Frederick C. 144
 Grant, Jaquelyn 15, 252, 299
 Gräßer, Erich 69, 88, 148
 Gray, Rebecca 274
 Green, A. 190
 Greenblatt, Stephen 9
 Greenspahn, Frederick E. 266
 Gregory, Brad S. 9
 Griffith, Nancy Shell 65
 Grimes, Ronald L. 265
 Grimm, Werner 174
 Groos, H. 69, 83, 89
 Grossmann, Walter 61
 Grunwald, K. 38
 Guitérrez, Gustavo 300
 Gundry, Robert H. 263
 Günzler, Claus 81
 Haber, Susan 280
 Habermas, Jürgen 9, 297
 Habinek, Thomas H. 97, 258
 Hahn, Ferdinand 16
 Hahn, Scott W. 4
 Hamann, Johann Georg 36-37
 Halbwachs, Maurice 190-3
 Hardacre, Helen 9
 Harland, Philip A. 258
 Harp, Stephen L. 73
 Hart, Kevin 267-8
 Harvey, A. E. 261
 Harvey, David Allen 73
 Havelock, E.A. 207-8
 Hayes, John H. 65
 Haynes, Stephen R. 297
 Hege, Brent A. R. 150
 Hearon, Holly E. 207
 Heidegger, Martin 1, 74, 291
 Hendrick, Charles W. 263
 Hengel, Martin 221, 254, 287-8
 Hermann, A. 80
 Herrick, James A. 33
 Hesse, Hermann 270
 Hettner, Hermann 35, 38-9, 41, 49
 Hidding, K. A. H. 88
 Hiers, Richard 145
 Higgins, A. J. B. 174
 Holladay, Carl 65-7, 177
 Holland, Norman 299
 Holub, Robert C. 2
 Holtzmann, Heinrich Julius 66, 132
 Hooker, Morna 13, 16, 175, 274
 Hopkins, Gerard Manley 253
 Hornig, Gottfried 60-1
 Horsley, Richard A. 192, 194
 Howard, Thomas Albert 74
 Howland, Jacob 30
 Hultgren, Arland J. 199, 277
 Huysmans, J.-K. 81, 85, 173, 252, 264,
 291
 Ice, Jackson Lee 68
 Incigneri, Brian J. 256
 Isaac, Benjamin 256
 Isaacson, Walter 86
 Israel, Jonathan 31, 44-45, 53-4
 Issel, Ernst 128
 Iwe, John Chijoke 280

- Jacob, Margaret C. 31, 36
Jacobi, Claus 72
Jacobi, E. R. 76
Jaraus, Konrad 74
Jaspers, Karl 3
Jauss, Hans Robert 2
Jenkins, Keith 250, 261
Jensen, Morten Høring 257
Jipp, Joshua W. 234
Johnson, Luke Timothy 260, 292
Jones, Gareth Stedman 97
Jonker, Gerdien 193
Joy, Charles, R. 76, 91-2
Joyce, James 243
Jülicher, Adolf 66
Kafka, Franz 293
Kähler, Martin 12, 183-4, 253
Kählert, Heinrich 149
Kaestli, Jean-Daniel 236
Kammen, Michael 298
Kant, Immanuel 10, 35, 36, 40, 82-83, 150
Kapczynski, Amy 210
Käsemann, Ernst 184, 200
Kasser, Jeffrey L. 186
Kaufmann, Michael G. 91
Kazen, Thomas 280
Keck, Leander E. 232, 294
Kee, Howard C. 278
Keener, Craig S. 16, 69, 208-9, 211, 239, 278
Keith, Chris 13, 16-17, 298-9
Kelber, Werner H. 188, 198, 200, 209-210, 242
Kelhoffer, James A. 268
Kelley, Shawn 17
Kermode, Frank 95, 97, 220
Khan, Aisha 197
Kierkegaard, Søren 30
Kim, Seyoon 174
Kirk, Alan 198-206, 209, 211, 230-1, 233-4, 238, 241
Kleffmann, Tom 151
Klein, Dietrich 33, 48, 50, 60, 111
Klein, Kerwin 195
Kloppenborg, John S. 261-2
Koch, Traugott 69
Koester, Helmut 280
Kraus, Andreas 74
Kruetzer, George 38
Kümmel, Werner G. 61, 66, 112, 127-8, 174
Labahn, Michael 235-6, 241-2
Lalor, Stephen 53
Lambek, Michael 198
Lange, Joachim 37
Lannert, Berthold 141, 148
Lassus, Pierre 63
Last, Nana 1
Lauria-Santiago, Aldo A. 259
Lawlor, Krista 197
Le Clerc, Jean 45
Le Donne, Anthony 16, 151, 193
Le Goff, Jacques 261
Lechner, Frank J. 3
Legaspi, Michael C. 4
Lehmann, Hartmut 3
Leland, John 53
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 39
LeMarquand 300
Lemcio, Eugene 223
Lessing, Gotthold E. 29-30, 33, 35, 46-51, 54, 60, 104-5
Levenson, Jon D. 216, 269
Lévi-Strauss, Claude 250
Levine, Lee I. 275
Lightfoot, R. H. 200
Lin, Yii-Jan 242
Lindars, Barnabas 174
Livingston, James C. 113, 119-120, 199
Locke, John 52-53
Loofs, Friedrich, 48
Lord, Albert B. 207
Lorde, Audre 15

- Lowrie, Walter 137
 Löwith, Karl 139
 Lübbe, Hermann 3
 Luhmann, Niklas 12
 Lührmann, Dieter 235
 Luckmann, Thomas 9
 Lundsteen, August Christian 53, 60, 111
 Lundström, Gösta 68
 Lyotard, Jean-Francois 239
 MacIntyre, Alisdair 133, 253
 Mack, Burton 211-2, 239
 Magda, Ksenija 216, 241
 Mageo, Jeannette Marie 192
 Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers 281
 Malina, Bruce J. 280
 Mann, Thomas 96
 March, Andrew F. 4
 Marcus, Joel 272
 Marksches, Christoph 254
 Marramao, Giacomo 4
 Marsh, Clive 127, 232
 Marshall, George 64, 68, 70, 75
 Martin, Dale B. 243, 254
 Mason, Anita 300, 302
 Marcus, Joel 256, 267
 Mathieu, V. 32
 Mazusawa, Tomoko 6
 Mbembe, Achille 260
 McFarland, John David 40
 McLeod, Hugh 9
 McLuhan, Marshall 207
 McKnight, Scot 12-13, 215, 238, 282,
 298-9
 McLaughlin, Peter 40
 McClelland, Charles 74
 Meeks, Wayne A. 243, 254
 Megill, Allan 96
 Meier, John P. 69-70, 261, 276, 280, 300
 Meillassoux, Quentin 271
 Mellon, Edwin 2
 Mendels, Doron 190, 209
 Mendelssohn, Moses 41-42
 Metzler, April E. 213
 Merz, Annette 223
 Meyer, H. J. 83
 Mills, Watson E. 293
 Miranda, José Porfirio 298
 Misztal, Barbara A. 194, 223
 Mittelman, Alan 49
 Mohr, C. B. 97
 Moloney, Francis J. 256
 Mönckeberg, Carl 43
 Monod, Jean-Claude 4
 Montgomery, William 66, 108, 116
 Moore, Stephen 196
 Moore Jr., Barrington 285
 Morgan, Robert 29, 102, 134
 Morowitz, Harold J. 302
 Morrow, John 150
 Mosala, Itumeleng J. 300
 Moshenska, Gabriel 189, 190-1, 194-5
 Moss, Candida 386
 Mournett, Terrence C. 210
 Moxter, Michael 238
 Müller, Mogens 174
 Münchow Christoph 144
 Munz, Walter 65
 Muslow, Martin 44-5, 105
 Muthu, Sankar 187
 Myers, Ched 265
 Myers, Mike 247
 Najman, Hindy 205
 Nasrallah, Laura Salah 206
 Neimeyer, Greg J. 213
 Neusner, Jacob 253
 Nicklas, Tobias 240
 Nies-Berger, Edouard 72, 78, 89, 92
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 82, 85, 88, 96, 117,
 138, 143, 146, 150-151
 Nineham, Dennis 67, 69, 134
 Nisbet, Hugh Barr 30, 47, 49
 Nora, Pierre 209, 264
 Noreña, Carlos F. 257
 Novakovic, Lindija 279

- O'Brien, Patrick 239
 Ochs, Peter 273
 Oermann, Niles Ole 8, 10, 11, 27, 64-5,
 70, 72, 74-81, 83-8, 91-3
 Olick, Jeffrey K. 193, 195
 Ong, Walter J. 207
 Paden, Roger 1
 Page, Sydney H. T. 284
 Paget, James Carleton 8, 64-7, 75-7, 80,
 92, 97, 99, 111, 120, 122-4, 135, 151
 Palumbo-Liu, David 258
 Pannenberg, Wolfhart 253
 Parker, David C. 185, 242
 Parris, David Paul 2
 Pauls, D. L. 67
 Pelikan, Jaroslav 295
 Peppard, Michael 257, 269, 272
 Perkinson, Jim 270
 Perrin, Norman 134
 Person, Laura 65
 Pfeleiderer, Otto 54
 Picht, Werner 68
 Pitre, Brant 168
 Pleitner, Henning 67, 90, 134, 148, 151
 Pokorny, Peter 206, 241
 Poling, David 64, 68, 70, 75
 Portier-Young, Anatheia E. 258, 285-6
 Posner, Richard A. 295
 Prager, Jeffrey 238
 Preuss, Julius 278
 Price, Jill 191
 Propp, Vladimir 100
 Prost, Antoine 261
 Pui-Lan, Kwok 300
 Radstone, S. 195
 Ram, H. 188
 Rappaport, Roy A. 264
 Ratzinger, Joseph 220
 Redman, Judith C. S. 226
 Reimarus, Hermann Samuel, see Subject
 Index
 Rendtorff, Rolf 243
 Reumann, John 261
 Reventlow, Henning Graf 33, 41, 49-52,
 57, 103
 Richter, Michael 99
 Rickard, John S. 243
 Ricoeur, Paul 181, 188-9, 219-220, 225,
 228
 Ridley, Aaron 138
 Riesner, Rainer 274
 Ritchie, Donald A. 196
 Ritschl, Albrecht 127, 141
 Robbins, Joyce 193, 195
 Robbins, Vernon K. 199, 274
 Robinson, James M. 18
 Rodríguez, Jeanette 192
 Rodríguez, Rafael 16, 210, 298
 Rogerson, John W. 209
 Rohrbaugh, Richard 207
 Rose, Steven 213
 Rowe, Robert D. 272
 Rowland, Christopher 275
 Rubin, David C. 204
 Rumi 268-270
 Rüsín, Jörn 227
 Russell, Jeffrey B. 284
 Sagarra, Eda 31
 Said, Edward 258
 Saine, Thomas P. 35
 Salvoterelli, Luigi 4
 Sanday, William 66
 Sanders, E.P. 69, 154, 196, 207, 210, 254,
 280
 Sanders, Jack T. 144
 Sarnitz, August 1
 Savage, Kirk 202
 Scarry, Elaine 286
 Schäfer, Peter 255, 278
 Shapiro, Barbara J. 295
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich 119, 164
 Schettler, R. 32
 Schmidt, Johann Lorenz 43, 226
 Schmidt, Karl Ludwig 199, 263

- Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm 43-4, 61
 Schmoller, Otto 128
 Schnabel, Eckhard J. 216
 Scholder, Klaus 112
 Schröter, Jens 24, 184-6, 188, 199, 203,
 206, 209, 217, 226-237, 241, 249-250,
 262-3, 265, 270, 296
 Schulik, Ulrich 93
 Schultze, Harald 32
 Schutz, Alfred 6
 Schütz, R. 80
 Schweitzer, Albert, see Subject Index
 Schweitzer, Gerhard 144
 Scott, James C. 142
 Semler, Johann S. 54, 60-61, 105, 113-
 114
 Senior, Donald 260
 Sevenster, Gerhard 144
 Sewell, William H. 103
 Shapiro, Barbara J. 187
 Shapiro, James S. 252
 Sheeham, Jonathan 46
 Sichére, Bernard 14
 Sieveking, Heinrich 30
 Sivan, E. 194
 Small, Jocelyn Penny 197
 Smith, D. Moody 242
 Smith, Stephen H. 272
 Snodgrass, Klyne 277
 Sobrino, Jon 300
 Sorkin, David 41
 Spalding, Almut 34-5, 105
 Spalding, Paul 43-4, 46, 48
 Sparling, Robert Alan 36
 Spear, Otto 88, 91
 Spiegel, Gabrielle M. 255
 Spinoza, Baruch 37-38
 Stark, Rodney 3
 Stein, Gertrude 302
 Steiner, George 292-3, 298-9, 302
 Steinmetz, David 30, 293
 Stemmer, Peter 30-1, 44
 Stenzel, Franz Karl 100
 Sternberg, Meir 100
 Stevens, Jacqueline 138
 Stevens, Wallace 250
 Stewart, M. A. 31
 Stoeffler, F. Ernest 35
 Stone, Donald D. 138
 Strauss, David F. 7, 30, 33, 123, 126,
 128, 138, 174, 179, 296
 Streeter, B. H. 151
 Stroker, William 240
 Sturrock, John 100
 Subilia, Vittorio 127-9
 Suermann, Thomas 65, 80
 Talbert, Charles H. 30-1, 33, 35, 45, 52,
 54, 112, 124
 Tare, Sanjeev 4
 Taubes, Jacob 13, 71, 189, 243
 Taylor, Charles 5, 32, 224
 Telford, William R. 276, 282
 Tejani, Shabnum 4
 Terrien, Samuel L. 266
 Thatcher, Tom 200-2, 206, 209, 230-1,
 234
 Thate, Michael J. 212, 234, 283
 Thiessen, Gerd 198, 223-4, 278
 Thiselton, Anthony C. 31, 294-5
 Thomson, Alistair 207
 Tilley, Maureen A. 285
 Tindal, Matthew 53
 Tolbert, Mary Ann 195
 Trapnell, William H. 53
 Travis, Roger 129
 Troeltsch, Ernst 4, 187
 Tschannen, Olivier 3
 Tuckett, Christopher 199
 Ulrich, Hans Günter 144
 Urban, Greg 190
 van Henten, Jan Willem 288
 Vansina, Jan 196-7, 222
 Volk, Lucia 206
 Von Dobschuetz, Ernst 66

- von Harnack, Adolf 120
von Lukács, Georg 239
von Ranke, Leopold 210
Wang, Ben 192
Watson, Francis 60, 65-6, 69, 71, 115,
119, 179, 198
Watson, Janet S. K. 241
Watts, Riki 267
Weaver, Walter P. 67
Weber, Max 4, 69, 73
Wedderburn, Alexander J. M. 228
Weiss, Johannes 19, 123, 127-128, 140-1,
215
Weren, Johannes Cornelis 174
Wernle, Paul 66, 102
White, Hayden 98, 103, 250
Wickham, Chris 190, 214
Wigelsworth, Jeffrey R. 33
Wijdeveld, Paul 1
Wiker, Benjamin 4
Wilder, Amos N. 68, 144
Wilkins, H. 272
Williams, Rowan 270
Willitts, Joel 212, 227
Winter, J. 194
Witherington, Ben 293
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 1, 2, 5, 6, 95, 125,
133, 179, 252, 301
Wolff, Hans M. 40
Wolff, Johann Christoph 34-38, 41, 46,
52, 54, 111
Wood, N. 190
Wordsworth, William 183-4
Woytt, Gustave 77
Wrede, William 18, 160, 163, 171, 184,
226
Wright, Archie T. 284
Wright, N. T. 69, 111, 248, 260, 288-9,
293
Wundt, Max 37
Wüst, Nicola Schümann Wolfgang 38
Xeravits, Géza G. 272
Yamamoto, Zipporah Lax 197
Yamane, David 3
Yeats, William Butler 130
Yerushalmi, Yosef H. 209
Zahn, Theodor 188, 235, 268
Zanker, Paul 207
Žižek, Slavoj 12, 14, 15, 82, 147, 250

Index of Subjects

Anti-Goeze 47

Collective memory 201-3, 209

Communal formation 249, 271, 275-6,
286, 288, 301

Cross 109, 167, 171, 173, 271

Cultural memory 203, 240, 259

Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben 86-88, 92-93

Eschatology (see also Schweitzer—
konsequente Eschatologie) 13, 19, 62,
101, 108, 116, 125, 126, 129, 132,
135-136, 144, 146, 152, 162-165, 174-
177, 217

formgeschichtliche Schule 199-201, 220

Genre 16-17

Hermeneutics 19

— feminist 15

— of relevance 25

— of suspicion 188

Historical criticism 4, 111, 126

Historical Jesus 2, 11, 205, 212, 219, 222,
230, 245, 247-8, 252, 277, 291, 292,
296, 298, 299, 302

Historicist philosophy 76

Historiography 2, 11, 12, 68-69, 95-98,
127, 196, 201, 220, 227

Jesus as apocalyptic 19, 265

Jesus Seminar 18

Jetzt and Dann 137-143, 147, 157, 164,
171

Kingdom (of God) 136-138, 145, 154-
156, 164, 169-170, 172

lieux de mémoire 209, 264

Life of Jesus, see *Leben-Jesus-Forschung*

Leben-Jesus-Forschung 4, 5, 6, 11, 12,
14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 24, 29, 65-66, 68,
70, 90, 91, 92, 94, 97-98, 102, 104,
106, 107, 111, 126, 148, 179, 183-7,
228, 245, 251, 261, 293-302

Lessing's ditch 49

Martyr 248, 273, 281ff.,

Memory theory 20, 24, 186-245, 257, 299

Messiah 162-170, 176, 179

Modernity 7-8, 12, 94, 118, 125, 130,
148, 301

Narrative 250-1

Narratology 100-2

Outbidding (Derrida) 5, 11, 13, 16, 22, 26,
235

Parousia 110

Passion 55, 115, 132, 167, 168-170, 177,
218, 224, 270,

Quest for the Historical Jesus, see *Leben-
Jesus-Forschung*

Reimarus 18, 21-23, 29-38, 40-46, 48-56,
60, 61, 98, 101-109, 111-116, 118,
122-124, 126, 139

—*Apologie* 30-32, 33, 34, 35, 43-45, 48-
51, 54, 56, 59, 62, 105

—*Fragmente* 46-50, 55-56, 60, 104-5,
113, 116

- Johann Albert Hinrich 46
- and Scripture 49-51, 53-59
- Repentance 141-142
- Resurrection 110, 173-174

- Sacred texts 13-14
- Secularism/Secularization 3-6, 9, 12, 13-14, 22, 130
- Schweitzer, Albert 1-2, 6-11, 18, 22, 26, 29, 54, 57, 61, 63-86, 97-108, 111-116, 118, 120, 122-124, 126-142, 144-152, 156, 158-159, 161, 163, 166-178, 185, 215, 216, 218, 239, 248, 250, 260, 261, 277, 282, 288, 292, 300
- and Bach 91-92
- and ethics 10, 72, 145-146
- and God 9-10
- and humanity 11
- and Kant 10, 74-75, 83, 86, 88, 90
- and the cross 171
- archival function 21, 126
- biography 73-81

- *Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen* 78
- *ethische Mystik* 8, 10-11, 76, 81-88, 91-93, 151, 174
- *Geschichte* 54, 62, 98, 101, 111, 112-113, 128, 141, 148-149, 171, 218, 292
- *konsequente Eschatologie* 10, 18, 22, 23, 67, 71, 81, 89, 93, 98, 101, 112, 115-118, 121-124, 126, 129-132, 149, 151, 152, 156, 166, 171, 176-179
- *Kulturphilosophie* 84
- Nobel Peace Prize 64, 81-82
- *Reich Gottes und Christentum* 170-1
- *Religionsphilosophie Kants* 84
- *Skizze* 128-129, 148-149, 171
- Universality 8
- *von Reimarus zu Wrede* 7, 11, 18, 65, 79, 84, 89, 102, 111, 128, 300
- Sitz im Leben* 166, 200, 256, 262-3, 289
- Social imaginary 5, 14, 29, 132, 295
- Synagogue 280-1