

JEWISH FICTIONAL LETTERS
FROM HELLENISTIC EGYPT

SBL Press

WRITINGS FROM THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

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JEWISH FICTIONAL LETTERS FROM HELLENISTIC EGYPT

The Epistle of Aristeas and Related Literature

Texts and Translations with Notes and Introductions by
L. Michael White and G. Anthony Keddie

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To the memory of Abraham Johannes Malherbe
and
Phyllis Melton Malherbe

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Preface

This volume evolved from a graduate seminar on Epistolography and Rhetoric in early Jewish and Christian literature taught at The University of Texas (Austin). The members of the seminar were all doctoral students in classics or ancient Mediterranean religions. Part of our goal was to examine the ways that epistolary style and rhetoric coming out of the Hellenistic-Roman literary tradition influenced both Jewish and Christian literary habits. Consequently, the burgeoning of new scholarship in the classical fields, as well as the tradition of epistolary studies in the New Testament and related fields, provided the research background for new approaches and studies.

When the seminar turned to examples in Hellenistic Jewish literature, and especially the Epistle of Aristeas, three points immediately stood out: first, that the Greek text of the Epistle of Aristeas remains very inaccessible for contemporary study. In fact, the last critical edition, that of Thackeray published in the second edition of Swete's *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, appeared just over a century ago. Second, it became apparent that most of the available translations over the last century are badly out of date and give little attention to its classical or Hellenistic literary context and, third, that most scholarship on the Epistle of Aristeas ignores or denies its epistolary qualities. In addition, we noted the proliferation of "embedded" letters as a prominent feature of Hellenistic Jewish historiographical literature of the second and first centuries BCE. This volume came about, therefore, as an effort to make these examples of Jewish fictional letters more accessible for study both in Greek and in English translation, with introductions and notes. Other than myself, the members of the seminar were Megan L. Case, Michael A. Flexsenhar III, G. Anthony Keddie, Bradley F. King, and Bartolo A. Natoli. All have contributed materially to this volume from the historical introductions to careful analysis of the various texts. I wish to thank all of them for their help.

G. Anthony Keddie, who studied at Yale Divinity School before coming to UT, has served as coauthor and editorial assistant for this volume. His contributions have been significant, as reflected in his recent publications on both the Eupolemus letters and 3 Maccabees, for which he also produced the translations here. The new Greek text and the translation of the Epistle of Aristeas are my own. The remainder of the Greek texts have been adapted as noted from the critical editions indicated. All other translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Thanks are also due to Bradley F. King, who compiled all the indices for the final volume, with a significant contribution by Alexandra Elizondo in assembling the Greek *index verborum* for the Epistle of Aristeas.

I also want to offer special thanks to David Konstan, Professor Emeritus of Classics at Brown University, now Professor at New York University, and past chair of the WGRW Editorial Board, who served as volume editor for this work. An outstanding classicist, David was gracious enough to lend his considerable knowledge of Hellenistic philosophical texts as well as Alexandrian poetry to this project. He gave the text and translation careful attention and offered numerous suggestions for correction and improvement. For his efforts, I am most grateful, and the translation, as a result, is far better.

Since the completion of the penultimate draft of this volume (2015), and while it was in the extensive editing process, one major new study of the Epistle of Aristeas appeared in print: the important new commentary by Benjamin G. Wright III, *The Letter of Aristeas: Aristeas to Philocrates on the Translation of the Law of the Jews* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015). The present text and translation were produced independently of Wright's. Moreover, because the focus of the present work is primarily on the literary character of the text as a work of epistolary fiction and on its Greek linguistic background, it was decided not to attempt an exhaustive comparison with Wright's translation and commentary. Each approach will undoubtedly yield distinctive insights on the text and its historical and literary context. We encourage interested readers to compare the translations in light of the Greek text, which is made available here, at long last, in an accessible form.

LMW
Roma, Da Fortunato
2016

Abbreviations

1s	first-person singular
3pl	third-person plural
3s	third-person singular

Primary Sources

Add Esth	Additions to Esther
<i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Adul. amic.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur</i>
<i>Aet.</i>	Philo, <i>De aeternitate mundi</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	Philo, <i>De agricultura</i>
Aris. Ex.	Aristeas the Exegete
<i>Att.</i>	Cicero, <i>Epistulae ad Atticum</i>
<i>A.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
<i>Alex.</i>	Callixenus of Rhodes, <i>Peri Alexandreias</i>
<i>Amic.</i>	Cicero, <i>De amicitia</i>
<i>Ant. rom.</i>	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>Antiquitates romanae</i>
<i>Anth.</i>	Vettius Valens, <i>Anthologiarum libri ix</i>
Anth. Pal.	Anthologia Palatina
<i>Apol.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Apologeticus</i>
<i>Arat. et Eud.</i>	Hipparchus, <i>In Arati et Eudoxi phaenomena commentariorum libri tres</i>
Aris. Ex.	Aristeas the Exegete
<i>Arist.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Aristides</i>
b.	Babylonian Talmud
B. Bat.	Baba Batra
<i>Bacch.</i>	Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i>
<i>Bel.</i>	Philo of Byzantium, <i>Belopoeica</i>
<i>Bibl.</i>	Photius, <i>Bibliotheca</i>
<i>Bibl. hist.</i>	Diodorus Siculus, <i>Bibliotheca historica</i>

B.J.	Josephus, <i>Bellum judaicum</i>
Brut.	Cicero, <i>Brutus</i>
C. Ap.	Josephus, <i>Contra Apionem</i>
Carm.	Pythagoras, <i>Carmen aureum</i>
Ceb. Tab.	Cebetis Tabula
Cels.	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
Cher.	Philo, <i>De cherubim</i>
Chron.	Eusebius, <i>Chronicon</i> ; Hippolytus, <i>Chronicon</i>
Comm. Matt.	Origen, <i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthei</i>
Comp.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>De compositione verborum</i>
Conf.	Philo, <i>De confusione linguarum</i>
Contempl.	Philo, <i>De vita contemplativa</i>
Cult. fem.	Tertullian, <i>De cultu feminarum</i>
Cyr.	Xenophon, <i>Cyropaedia</i>
De eloc.	Pseudo-Demetrius, <i>De elocutione</i>
De fluv.	Pseudo-Plutarch, <i>De fluviosis</i>
De mus.	Pseudo-Plutarch, <i>De musica</i>
Decal.	Philo, <i>De decalogo</i>
Deipn.	Athenaeus, <i>Deipnosophistae</i>
Dem.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>De Demosthene</i>
Descr.	Pausanias, <i>Graeciae descriptio</i>
Deus	Philo, <i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</i>
Dial.	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>
Dian.	Callimachus, <i>In Dianam</i>
Diatr.	Epictetus, <i>Diatribai</i>
Din.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>De Dinacho</i>
Ecl.	Stobaeus, <i>Eclogae</i>
Ekl.	George Syncellus, <i>Ekloge chronographias</i>
Ep.	<i>Epistulae (Epistles)</i>
Ep. Afr.	Origen, <i>Epistula ad Africanum</i>
Exil.	Plutarch, <i>De exilio</i>
Fact.	Valerius Maximus, <i>Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri ix</i>
Fam.	Cicero, <i>Epistulae ad familiares</i>
Fin.	Cicero, <i>De finibus</i>
Flacc.	Philo, <i>In Flaccum</i>
Form. ep.	Pseudo-Demetrius, <i>Formae epistolicae</i>
Frat. amor.	Plutarch, <i>De fraterno amore</i>
Fug.	Philo, <i>De fuga et inventione</i>

GEA	Greek Esther A
GEB	Greek Esther B (LXX Esther)
GEL	Lucianic Greek Esther
Geogr.	Strabo, <i>Geographica</i>
Haer.	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>
Her.	Philo, <i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
Hippoc. aphor.	Galen, <i>Hippocratis aphorismi et Galeni in eos commentarii</i>
Hist.	Polybius, <i>Historiae</i> ; Thucydides, <i>Historiae</i>
Hist. Alex.	Quintus Curtius Rufus, <i>Historiae Alexandri Magni Macedonis</i>
Hist. eccl.	Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
Hist. rom.	Dio Cassius, <i>Historiae romanae</i>
Hypoth.	Philo, <i>Hypothetica</i>
In Hippocr.	Apollonius of Citium, <i>In Hippocratis de articulis commentarius</i>
Ios.	Philo, <i>De Iosepho</i>
Jov.	Callimachus, <i>In Jovem</i>
LAB	Liber antiquitatum biblicalarum
Leg.	Cicero, <i>De legibus</i> ; Philo, <i>Legum allegoriae</i> ; Plato, <i>Leges</i>
Legat.	Philo, <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
Liber de phil.	Arius Didymus, <i>Liber de philosophorum sectis</i>
LXX	Septuagint
Lyc.	Plutarch, <i>Lycurgus</i>
m.	Mishnah
Mem.	Xenophon, <i>Memorabilia</i>
Mens.	Epiphanius of Salamis, <i>De mensuris et ponderibus</i>
Migr.	Philo, <i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
Mor.	Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>
Mort.	Philodemus, <i>De morte</i>
Mos.	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
Mut.	Philo, <i>De mutatione nominum</i>
Nat.	Pliny the Elder, <i>Naturalis historia</i>
Nic.	Pseudo-Scymnus, <i>Ad Nicomedem regem</i>
Off.	Cicero, <i>De officiis</i>
OL	Old Latin
Opif.	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
Or.	Libanius, <i>Oratio</i> ; Themistius, <i>Orationes</i>

<i>Paean Delph.</i>	Limenius, <i>Paean Delphicus ii</i>
<i>Phoc.</i>	Nepos, <i>Phocion</i>
<i>Praep. ev.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
<i>Prom</i>	Aeschylus, <i>Prometheus vinctus</i>
<i>Protr.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Protrepticus</i>
<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	Psalms of Solomon
<i>QE</i>	Philo, <i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum</i>
<i>Quaest. hom.</i>	Porphyry, <i>Quaestiones homericae</i>
<i>Re eques.</i>	Xenophon, <i>De re equestris</i>
<i>Reg. imp. apophth.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	Cicero, <i>De republica</i>
<i>Rer. nat.</i>	Lucretius, <i>De rerum natura</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	Plato, <i>Respublica</i>
<i>Sacr.</i>	Philo, <i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
<i>Sanh.</i>	Sanhedrin
<i>Sent.</i>	Pseudo-Phocylides, <i>Sententiae</i>
<i>Sent. Syr. Men.</i>	Sentences of the Syriac Menander
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	Sibylline Oracles
<i>Somn.</i>	Philo, <i>De somniis</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Strat.</i>	Polyaenus, <i>Strategemata</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement, <i>Stromateis</i>
<i>[Subl.]</i>	Longinus, <i>De sublimitate</i>
<i>T. 12 Patr.</i>	Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
<i>T. Job</i>	Testament of Job
<i>T. Levi</i>	Testament of Levi
<i>Tg. Ps.-J.</i>	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
<i>TGC</i>	Cornutus, <i>Theologiae Graecae compendium</i>
<i>Theat.</i>	Plato, <i>Theatetus</i>
<i>Var. hist.</i>	Aelian, <i>Varia historia</i>
<i>Vesp.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Vespasianus</i>
<i>Vir. ill.</i>	Jerome, <i>De viris illustribus</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	Philo, <i>De virtutibus</i>
<i>Virt. mor.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De virtute morali</i>
<i>Vit.</i>	Josephus, <i>Vita</i>
<i>Vit. X orat.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Vitae decem oratorum</i>
<i>Vit. phil.</i>	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Vitae philosophorum</i>
<i>Vulg.</i>	Vulgate
<i>Yad.</i>	Yadayim

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- AB Anchor Bible
- ABD Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Aeg *Aegyptus: Rivista italiana di egittologia e di papirologia*
- AGJU Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
- AJC Ancient Judaism and Christianity
- AJP *American Journal of Philology*
- AJSR *Association for Jewish Studies Review*
- ALGHJ Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
- ANF Roberts, Alexander, and James Donaldson, eds. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*. 10 vols. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885–1887.
- ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*. Part 2, *Principat*. Edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–.
- APF Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete

APOT	Charles, R. H., ed. <i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament</i> . 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913.
AWEAT	<i>Archiv für wissenschaftliche Erforschung des Alten Testaments</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BASOP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
BGU	Berliner Griechische Urkunden
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BIOSCS	<i>Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BSGRT	<i>Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	<i>Cahiers de la Revue biblique</i>
CBP	<i>Cahiers de Biblia Patristica</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCM	<i>Circe de clásicos y modernos</i>
CCWJWC	Cambridge Commentaries on the Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200
CdE	<i>Chronique d'Egypte</i>
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CGLC	Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics
CIJ	Frey, Jean-Baptiste, ed. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judai-carum</i> . Rev. ed. 2 vols. New York: Ktav, 1975.
CPJ	Tcherikover, Victor, Alexander Fuks, and Menahem Stern, eds. <i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> . 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957–1964.
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCT	Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition
EC	<i>Early Christianity</i>
EDEJ	Collins, John J., and Daniel C. Harlow, eds. <i>The Eerd-mans Dictionary of Early Judaism</i> . Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

<i>EncJud</i>	Skolnik, Fred, and Michael Berenbaum, eds. <i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> . 2nd ed. 22 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>FGrH</i>	Jacoby, Felix. <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964.
<i>FHG</i>	Müller, Karl. <i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum collectit, disposuit, notis et prolegomenis illustravit, indicibus instruxit</i> . 5 vols. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1841–1872.
<i>GCS</i>	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
<i>GR</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>HCS</i>	Hellenistic Culture and Society
<i>HDR</i>	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
<i>Hen</i>	<i>Henoch</i>
<i>Hesperia</i>	<i>Hesperia: Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens</i>
<i>HNT</i>	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>HS</i>	Hellenistische Studien
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>HUCM</i>	Monographs of the Hebrew Union College
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> . Editio Minor. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1924–.
<i>IGA</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae Aegypti</i> . Edited by Evaristo Breccia. 2 vols. Cairo, 1911. Repr., Chicago: Ares, 1976–1978.
<i>IGP</i>	Strack Max L., ed. <i>Inscriptiones Graecae Ptolemaicae: Sammlung Griechischer Ptolemäer-Inschriften</i> . Berlin, 1897. Repr., Chicago: Ares, 1976.
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSHRZ</i>	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSJSup</i>	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods Supplement Series

JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
MGWJ	<i>Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
NCLS	Nottingham Classical Literature Studies
NewDocs	Horsley, Greg H. R., and Stephen Llewelyn, eds. <i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> . North Ryde, NSW: The Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1981–.
NIB	Keck, Leander E., ed. <i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i> . 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004.
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OCD	Hornblower, Simon, and Antony Spawforth, eds. <i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> . 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
OGI	Dittenberger, Wilhelm, ed. <i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> . 2 vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903–1905.
OTP	Charlesworth, James H., ed. <i>Old Testament Pseudepigraphy</i> . 2 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985.
PAPS	<i>Proceedings of the American Philological Society</i>
PAST	Pauline Studies
PG	Migne, Jacques-Paul, ed. <i>Patrologia Graeca [= Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca]</i> . 162 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857–1886.
Phil	<i>Philologus</i>
PhilSup	Philologus Supplement Series

PSI	Da papiri della Società italiana
PW	Wissowa, Georg, and Wilhelm Kroll, eds. <i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . 50 vols. in 84 parts. Stuttgart: Metzler and Druckenmüller, 1894–1980.
RBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
RCT	Routledge Classical Translations
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RivB	<i>Rivista biblica italiana</i>
RUSCH	Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities
SB	Preisigke, Friedrich, et al., eds. <i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i> . Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1915–.
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SC	Sources chrétiennes
ScrHier	<i>Scripta Hierosolymitana</i>
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SGPI [=IGP 1]	Strack Max L., ed. <i>Inscriptiones Graecae Ptolemaicae: Sammlung Griechischer Ptolemäer-Inschriften</i> . Berlin, 1897; repr. Chicago: Ares, 1976.
SIG	Dittenberger, Wilhelm. <i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i> . 3rd ed. 4 vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–1924.
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SPhiloA	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum/Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity
StPatr	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
StPB	<i>Studia post-biblica</i>
SVTG	Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum
SVF	Arnim, Hans Friedrich August von. <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> . 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1924.
SVTP	<i>Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha</i>
TCS	Text-Critical Studies
TED	Translations of Early Documents

TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TSK	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
UPZ	Wilcken, Ulrich. <i>Urkunden der Ptolemäer Zeit.</i> 2 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1927–1935.
VAWAmst	Verhandelingen der Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	<i>Vigiliae Christianae Supplement Series</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WGRWSup	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series
YCS	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

SBL Press