



June 2015, 230 pages
Emory Studies in Early Christianity 17

Paperback \$29.95
ISBN 9781628371086
Hardcover \$44.95
ISBN 9781628371093
eISBN 9781628371109

The “Nocturnal Side of Science” in David Friedrich Strauss’s *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*

Thomas Fabisiak

A close look at how Strauss’s engagement with popular and scholarly controversies influenced his study of the Gospels

David Friedrich Strauss’s *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* is known as a monumental contribution to the critical, scientific study of religion and Christian origins. It was widely read and influenced literary and historical research on the Bible as well as critical philosophy between Hegel and Nietzsche. Less well-known are Strauss’s writings from the same period on “the nocturnal side of nature,” paranormal phenomena such as demon possession, animal magnetism, and the ghost-seeing of Frederike Hauffe, the famous “Seeress of Prevorst.”

Features:

- Illuminates unfamiliar features of early nineteenth-century theology, philosophy, and medicine showing how spirituality and science blended together in these fields.
- Demonstrates the importance of Western esotericism and popular religion in the history of modern biblical studies
- Sheds new light on Strauss’s study of the Gospels as myths, his critique of miracles and his account of the historical Jesus

Thomas Fabisiak is Advanced Certificate Coordinator and Student Advisor for the Certificate in Theological Studies Program at Lee Arrendale State Prison, Candler School of Theology. His research focuses on ancient apocalyptic literature and its modern reception history.

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