

THE REDISCOVERY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

FROM TOLAND TO BAUR

Edited by

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Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

THE REDISCOVERY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY
From Toland to Baur

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CONTENTS

Series Editor’s Foreword	vii
Preface	
<i>F. Stanley Jones</i>	ix
Abbreviations	xi

PART 1: BACKGROUND

“Christian Jews” and “Jewish Christians”: The Jewish Origins of Christianity in English Literature from Elizabeth I to <i>Toland’s Nazarenus</i>	
<i>Matti Myllykoski</i>	3

PART 2: JOHN TOLAND AND THE REDISCOVERY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

John Toland’s <i>Nazarenus</i> and the Original Plan of Christianity <i>Pierre Lurbe</i>	45
The Invention of Jewish Christianity in John Toland’s <i>Nazarenus</i> <i>Matt Jackson-McCabe</i>	67
The Genesis, Purpose, and Significance of John Toland’s <i>Nazarenus</i> <i>F. Stanley Jones</i>	91

PART 3: FROM TOLAND TO BAUR

“Jewish Christianity” and “Christian Deism” in Thomas Morgan’s <i>The Moral Philosopher</i> <i>Matt Jackson-McCabe</i>	105
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From Toland to Baur: Tracks of the History of Research into Jewish Christianity <i>F. Stanley Jones</i>	123
F. C. Baur's Place in the Study of Jewish Christianity <i>David Lincicum</i>	137
Nazarenus: Or, Jewish, Gentile, and Mahometan Christianity <i>John Toland</i>	167
Preface.....	169
Letter I.....	187
Contributors.....	243
Index of Modern Authors.....	245

PREFACE

The following is a collective effort to lay the foundation for a revisionist history of the early critical study of Jewish Christianity. It grew out of the work of the Society of Biblical Literature's Consultation on Jewish Christianity, which has now become a Section.

That the Deists and the humanistic discussion of their time lie at the root of modern critical biblical studies has gained fairly general, though still not universal, recognition in historical accounts of the field. Anyone who has ever read Richard Bentley, for example, will be able to deny his primacy in the realm of New Testament textual criticism only with great difficulty. Further illumination of this British background of New Testament studies generally has proven a fruitful area of research over the last few decades; its relevance for the general intellectual revolution of the time has also attracted the attention of a noteworthy cadre of intellectual historians. The technological revolution of the Internet in combination with the digitalization of large collections of incunabula and other early publications has furthermore now made it possible for the modern scholar to research the early modern period with resources that exceed the individual holdings of even the world's greatest libraries. It is thus possible to rewrite the early history of biblical studies (not to speak of the intellectual history of the time) with greatly increased accuracy. This volume is such an exploration into one precise way in which the British Deists, in particular John Toland, set the table for later critical biblical studies. Combined, these studies explode the myth that F. C. Baur initiated the study of Jewish Christianity in 1831 and lay out the actual genesis of such inquiry over a century before Baur. This inquiry into Jewish Christianity has played, and still plays, no little role in the agenda of biblical and early Christian studies. Thus, examination of its genesis will shed some rarefied light on the study of Christian origins.

The book begins with a historical survey of English language usage of terms such as "Christian Jews" and "Jewish Christians" prior to John

Toland; it will be apparent here how Internet resources and digital collections with “search” capabilities have revolutionized the ability to trace in detail historical developments in early modern literature. Next, three studies seek to characterize Toland’s accomplishment as reflected particularly in his book *Nazarenus* (1718), though also with attention to the context of this publication in Toland’s career. A final section investigates the subsequent history of the study of Jewish Christianity and seeks to lift the veil on the mystery of how Toland’s insights found their way to Germany and eventually to Ferdinand Christian Baur.

The contributions in this book do not explore why critical historical research into New Testament and ancient Christianity did not flourish further in England but instead found a way forward in Germany. That is a fascinating topic that the reader is encouraged to ponder and explore elsewhere.

Discussion of Toland would thus seem to be promising. Since, however, discussion cannot compete with actually reading Toland, a transcribed version of the most relevant parts of *Nazarenus* (title page, preface, and “first letter”) is also included. This supplement should simultaneously enhance deliberation of the preceding studies and provide ready reference to *Nazarenus*. Corrections from a list of errata on the last page of *Nazarenus* have been silently inserted; other mistakes (mostly typographical, with the exception of a string of Greek transcriptional errors in note 33) Toland “left to the reader’s candor.” They are again left here as such, without the indication *sic*. In view of broken type and other printing imperfections, a number of copies of the second edition (also sometimes of the first edition) have been consulted. One day this transcription may provide a fairly accurate electronic version of the text. Archive.org currently has online an exceptional color pdf of the second edition from the library of Princeton Theological Seminary.

For consideration, acceptance, and encouragement of the project for the SBL History of Biblical Studies series, gratitude is extended particularly to Lawrence L. Welborn. Bob Buller has again earned thanks for implementation of his well-honed skills in turning a manuscript into a book.