

A Very Damning Truth: Walter Grundmann, Adolf Schlatter, and Susannah Heschel's *The Aryan Jesus*^{*}

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Over the past several decades historians have turned a critical eye to the complicity of the German churches in fostering poisonous societal attitudes towards Jews on the eve of the Holocaust.¹ Emerging from this research has been the disputed relationship between Christian anti-Judaism and the intense race-based anti-Semitism of the Nazi era. Separating the content and motivation of these two forms of disparagement has allowed Christians to remove themselves from the genocidal equation linked to radical, racist attacks on Jews.² Susannah Heschel's *The Aryan Jesus* tackles this issue by examining the historical backdrop and explicit

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¹Franklin H. Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews: The Failure of Christians to Understand the Jewish Experience* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975; repr., Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996); Stephen R. Haynes, *Prospects for Post-Holocaust Theology* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991); Micha Brumlik, "Post-Holocaust Theology: German Theological Responses since 1945," in *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust* (ed. Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 169–88; Ursula Büttner, "'The Jewish Problem Becomes a Christian Problem': German Protestants and the Persecution of the Jews in the Third Reich," in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism: German Society and the Persecution of the Jews, 1933–1941* (ed. David Bankier; Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000) 431–59. For summaries of new conclusions and bibliographies, see Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, "The German Churches and the Holocaust," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (ed. Dan Stone; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 296–318.

² Perhaps the best example of this perspective is the Catholic Church's statement on the Holocaust, "We Remember: A Reflection on the 'Shoah'," *Origins* 27 (1998) 669, 671–75. For an

content of racially motivated attacks on Jews by German Protestants in the years preceding and during the Holocaust. Targeting the Eisenach Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life together with the Institute's leader, Walter Grundmann, her findings may well render obsolete any theoretical dichotomy between religious anti-Judaism and racial anti-Semitism.³

Setting aside the "tired argument that racism is about biology,"⁴ Heschel found in the religious-racist discourse of that period a connection between accusations of a degenerate, immoral spirit, and the socially active, physical "embodiment" of that spirit. Her examination of a number of prominent theories touching on race and culture revealed a circular reasoning that "made each the determinant of the other: culture indicated race, and race produced culture."⁵ Physical bodies were not dangerous by themselves, but to anti-Semites the Jewish body carried degenerate Jewish morality.⁶ For the Institute and Grundmann, this racist perspective provided a platform for an "incarnational theology"⁷ in which spiritual characteristics determined the essential nature of the physical. Such a formation of racial identity led Heschel to deduce that "what marks the distinction between Aryan and Jew, in the writings of Institute members, is not physical appearance but spiritual and moral qualities."⁸ Her conclusion is significant, for it brings to light the disturbing reality that litanies of spiritual condemnation expressed by the prevalent theological anti-Judaism—even if lacking crass racial overtones or motivation—share strikingly similar conclusions with virulent racial denigration regarding the nature and danger of the Jews.

Heschel's evaluation of Grundmann touches on his admiration for his Tübingen mentor Adolf Schlatter. In an autobiographical reflection written many years later, Grundmann stated that:

Much has linked me to him [Schlatter], and one of the great joys of my life is that his son, Theodor Schlatter, told me that his father thought highly of me and had stood up for me at the time of the *Kirchenkampf*, when I frequently faced hostility. I owe much to Adolf Schlatter; more than anyone else he opened up the Bible to me, and my own exegetical work is again and again greatly influenced by him.⁹

early critique, see David I. Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001) 5–8.

³ Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 286.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Quoted in Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20; Boston: Brill, 2009) 293.

Such effusive gratitude is understandable, since during Grundmann's time at Tübingen, Schlatter's influence at the university peaked, and he was viewed as the preeminent spiritual authority for students and clergy alike.¹⁰ Evidence suggests, however, that the young theologian and Schlatter did not have a close personal relationship.¹¹ There is no extant correspondence between the two, and though Grundmann spoke of private conversations at Schlatter's home, the frequency and depth of any discussions cannot be ascertained. As an assistant to Gerhard Kittel, whose own unsurpassed adoration for Schlatter is well documented, Grundmann could not have helped but breathe the air of respect enveloping the Tübingen giant.¹² From all appearances, Grundmann's relationship to Schlatter was one of an admiring student who absorbed every word written and spoken by the teacher, finding genuine inspiration that indelibly marked his personal and professional life. He shared aspects of Schlatter's pietistic orientation to faith, and spoke of the grace and joy in Schlatter's sermons. He could certainly identify with Schlatter's strong nationalism, which was critical of the social liberalism of the Weimar Republic, the Enlightenment, atheism, and moral degeneration. Grundmann's fascination with Adolf Stoecker's link between the Christian gospel and social responsibility would have compelled him to wade through the same anti-Semitic waters as Schlatter had years earlier in his career, with both coming to share in their own manner Stoecker's gospel that Judaism constituted a moral and social problem for the German *Volk*.¹³

It was, however, in the confessional context of praising the joyous content of Schlatter's thought that Grundmann uttered his most controversial comment, claiming that "Schlatter built the path for us from theology to National Socialism."¹⁴ Grundmann's contention is problematic. Despite conceding Schlatter's right-leaning patriotism and antipathy to Judaism, his apologists distance him from any form of racist discourse.¹⁵ Their objection cannot be ignored. Schlatter in no way shared Grundmann's embrace of Nazi power politics, and his anti-Jewish polemic avoided racial ideology. Nevertheless, the fact that the nationalistic and racially charged

¹⁰ Peter Stuhlmacher, "Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938)," in *Theologen des Protestantismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (ed. Martin Greschat; 2 vols.; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978) 2:219–40, at 228.

¹¹ For the following on Grundmann and Schlatter, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 538–40.

¹² Gerhard Kittel, "Gedenkrede bei der akademischen Feier," in *Ein Lehrer der Kirche. Worte des Gedenkens an D. Adolf Schlatter 1852–1938* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1938) 19–33.

¹³ For Grundmann, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 539; for Schlatter and Stoecker, see below.

¹⁴ Walter Grundmann, "Adolf Schlatter. Ein Wort des Grußes und des Gedenkens zu seinem 85. Geburtstag am 16. August," *Kommende Kirche* 33 (August 1937) 3 (unpaginated).

¹⁵ Werner Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1996) 757–58, esp. 788–89; Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer. Ihr Verständnis im Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz* (WUNT 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997) 268. This position is explicitly articulated by Schlatter defender Robert Morgan, in his somewhat reactionary response to Heschel. Morgan openly admits "Schlatter's tendency to stereotype Jews and Judaism," yet vehemently rejects any complicity on his part with anti-Semitism (Robert Morgan, "Susannah Heschel's Aryan Grundmann," *JSNT* 32 [2010] 431–94; esp. 482, 484).

Grundmann could find inspiration and guidance in Schlatter's work prompts the question: Can Adolf Schlatter, the respected theologian, whose work flourished within conservative Protestantism before and after the Holocaust, remain unscathed by Heschel's findings?

Throughout his teaching career, the Swiss-born Schlatter reflected the piety and conservative biblicism of his early family life.¹⁶ Having established his prominence at Tübingen, he held well-attended emeritus lectures for eight years after his retirement in 1922 and continued active publication and correspondence, both personal and professional, with fellow theologians until his death in 1938.¹⁷ Popular with pastors and the common people in the pew, he taught at least two generations of German pastors, including a number of academic elites who profoundly influenced twentieth-century Christian theology.¹⁸ As "the most important figure in the Faculty of Protestant Theology at Tübingen" during the first third of the twentieth century,¹⁹ Schlatter's views carried both spiritual and academic authority, making his voice significant in shaping the opinions of many conservative Christians.

Notwithstanding Schlatter's fame, only recently have critical studies suggested his complicity in the darker aspects of anti-Jewish theology.²⁰ Adoration by conservative Christians in both Germany and America has resulted in overwhelmingly sympathetic portraits of Schlatter with a popular biography, monographs, and introductory essays to selected translations ignoring controversial aspects of his career.²¹ The

¹⁶ Schlatter was born in St. Gallen in 1852. Adolf Schlatter, *Rückblick auf meine Lebensarbeit* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1977) 13–17.

¹⁷ For Schlatter's life, see Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche*. An earlier popular biography was idem, *Adolf Schlatter* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 1988); translated by Robert W. Yarbrough as *Adolf Schlatter: A Biography of Germany's Premier Biblical Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

¹⁸ Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (trans. W. J. Montague; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 4. For a list of noted scholars who heard Schlatter and spoke of his influence—both positive and negative—including Paul Althaus, Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich, see Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs* (2d edition; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002) 179.

¹⁹ Peter Stuhlmacher, "Adolf Schlatter's Interpretation of Scripture," *NTS* 24 (1978) 436–46, at 434.

²⁰ Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz, "Adolf Schlatters sicht des Judentums im politischen Kontext," in *Christlicher Antijudaismus und Antisemitismus. Theologische und kirchliche Programme deutscher Christen* (ed. Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz; Frankfurt-am-Main: Haag and Herchen, 1994); James E. McNutt, "Adolf Schlatter and the Jews," *German Studies Review* 26 (2003) 353–70; idem, "Vessels of Wrath, Prepared to Perish: Adolf Schlatter and the Spiritual Extermination of the Jews," *ThTo* 63 (2006) 176–90; Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 253–326.

²¹ In addition to the biography by Werner Neuer and essay by Peter Stuhlmacher, both noted above, see also Stephen F. Dintaman, *Creative Grace: Faith and History in the Theology of Adolf Schlatter* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Schlatter Reception Then: His *New Testament Theology*," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3 (1999) 40–51; Robert Yarbrough, "Schlatter Reception Now: His *New Testament Theology*," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3 (1999) 52–65; Yarbrough, "Witness to the Gospel in *Academe*: Adolf Schlatter as a Teacher of the Church," *Perichoresis* 4 (2006) 1–18. Note also the introductions to Schlatter's translated works, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995); *The History of the Christ: The Foundation for New Testament Theology* (trans. Andreas J.

foremost proponent of such selective veneration is Schlatter's biographer Werner Neuer. His massive study of Schlatter's life and thought was "written mainly with Schlatter's still enormous conservative evangelical readership in view."²² Neuer's confessionalism steered him clear of several questionable aspects of his subject's life, and led him to either ignore or minimize the decidedly anti-Jewish character of Schlatter's legacy. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Neuer studied at Tübingen, and later wrote the biography while working in affiliation with the University. His relative silence on anti-Semitism followed that of the Tübingen church historian Klaus Scholder, whose meticulously detailed study of the Protestant church's early struggles under the Third Reich contained but one innocuous reference to Gerhard Kittel and no mention of Schlatter's antipathy to the Jews.²³ In like fashion, Tübingen New Testament professor Peter Stuhlmacher, who may be credited with initiating the Schlatter "renaissance" in the closing decades of the twentieth century, has refused to acknowledge the harmful anti-Jewish character of Schlatter's work.²⁴ Such partiality makes understandable the offense taken by Schlatter's devotees to any suggested connection to the Nazi Walter Grundmann.

The reaction of Schlatter follower Robert Morgan to Heschel's criticism of Schlatter should not be surprising: "Christians who have been nourished by his edifying writings and admire the transparent goodness of his character will be perplexed by some recent casual defamations of him."²⁵ Morgan's response touches the key issue with Schlatter interpretation today and reveals the historiographical shift in Holocaust research that casts shadows on his legacy. Morgan speaks for those who see in Schlatter a *theological* voice for their vision of authentic Christian faith, with his literalistic biblicism and triumphalist view of Christianity connecting

Köstenberger; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1997); *The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999); *Do We Know Jesus? Daily Insights for the Mind and Soul* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2005). This last translation is of *Kennen Wir Jesus? Ein Gang durch ein Jahr im Gespräch mit Ihm* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1937). Published in 1937 while anti-Jewish rhetoric was peaking, this book will be problematic for Schlatter's legacy.

²² Robert Morgan, review of *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche* by Werner Neuer, *JTS* 50 (1999) 824–26, at 824.

²³ Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 1, Preliminary History and the Time of Illusions, 1918–1934* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). For a critical discussion of Tübingen's silence in the context of Siegel-Wenschkewitz's break from that school, see Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 30–31. See also Tanja Hetzer, "Deutsche Stunde". *Volksgemeinschaft und Antisemitismus in der politischen Theologie bei Paul Althaus* (Munich: Allitera, 2009) 12.

²⁴ Stuhlmacher, "Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938)," 229; Siegel-Wenschkewitz, "Adolf Schlatters Sicht des Judentum," 95–110, at 108. Ulrich Oelschläger, *Judentum und evangelische Theologie 1909–1965. Das Bild des Judentums im Spiegel der ersten drei Auflagen des Handwörterbuchs "Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart"* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005) 59.

²⁵ Robert Morgan, "Susannah Heschel's Aryan Grundmann," 480. Such perplexity may stem from unfamiliarity with recent historical research on this period. Heschel has shown how Morgan is often "mired in outdated historiographical paradigms regarding the German churches" ("Historiography of Antisemitism versus Anti-Judaism: A Response to Robert Morgan," *JSNT* 33 [2011] 257–79, at 262).

harmoniously to the world of conservative believers, especially the American evangelical community.²⁶ Robert Yarbrough, an American translator of Schlatter's work, is emphatic on the significance of bringing Schlatter to the English-speaking world: "Schlatter's importance for contemporary Biblical interpreters and especially evangelicals comes clearly to the fore. . . . Schlatter's historical observation and theological synthesis yielded a Jesus and gospel message of classic Christian proportions."²⁷ Resurrecting Schlatter, however, is problematic both historically and theologically, since advocates extract him from the societal contingencies of his day and contextualize his thought within confessionally correct principles. A comment from Schlatter's translator, Andreas J. Köstenberger, is telling: "Let Schlatter's voice be heard again in a theological landscape that has seen *some change*, but one that is *not so different* that we can afford to neglect the prophetic words spoken by one of the greatest theologians of this century."²⁸ Such a tepid view of the theological landscape ignores a tectonic shift in postwar Holocaust theology, specifically: the church's moral failure toward the Jews, bound as it was to Christianity's long history of anti-Judaism. Yet it is precisely at this point where Schlatter's advocates, and particularly Robert Morgan, erect a wall of defense against any hint that the theological anti-Judaism so ubiquitous in Schlatter's thought could in any way be construed as anti-Semitic.

Morgan is intent on "sharpening the distinction between antisemitism and theological anti-Judaism" so as to avoid "injustice to German theology."²⁹ Ignoring Doris Bergen's counsel that "such distinctions tend to lose their relevance in the context of National Socialism,"³⁰ he seeks to employ such differences in defending Schlatter from what he sees as "an antipathy to theology" that "can blemish writing on church history."³¹ Morgan, however, in delineating his lexicon of hatred for the Jews, becomes ensnared in his own differentiations. While distinguishing "passive cultural antisemitism" from "theological antisemitism," he speaks of the latter containing "monstrous religious beliefs such as the guilt and curse of Israel for the death of Christ [which] lead directly to antisemitism."³² Morgan should know that

²⁶ As shown below, Schlatter's research holds little historical-critical value for contemporary biblical study. Morgan himself states that Schlatter's conservative biblicism produced "historical conclusions [that] 'would be almost universally rejected today'" (Robert Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter* [ed. and trans. Robert Morgan; Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1973] 29).

²⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, review of *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche* by Werner Neuer, *JETS* 41 (1998) 139–41, at 140.

²⁸ Translator's preface to *History of the Christ*, 14–15 [emphasis mine].

²⁹ Robert Morgan, "Susannah Heschel's Aryan Grundmann," 434.

³⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 443.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 476.

³² *Ibid.*, 441. What follows this assertion illustrates the somewhat confusing nature of Morgan's plethora of "-isms": "Neither Grundmann nor Gerhard Kittel . . . were guilty of this medieval 'theological antisemitism'. Further, their poisonous modern antisemitism is distinct from the results of their New Testament scholarship. . . . The theological anti-Judaism that they shared with many

no German theologian of the twentieth century was more intent on placing corporate guilt on the Jews for their murder of the Christ than Adolf Schlatter.³³ Perhaps that awareness compelled Morgan to finally admit that Schlatter's "theological anti-Judaism could fuel antisemitism."³⁴ Heschel's research has raised the stakes by arguing that the fueling of anti-Semitism by anti-Judaism makes the latter intrinsic to the virulent combustion of the former. Thus, *The Aryan Jesus*, and the scholarship critical of Schlatter contained therein, bears no antipathy to theology, but rather an antipathy to a theology which has proven to be a blemish on church history.

Schlatter was a staunch nationalist whose theology of God and *Volk* foreshadowed the more highly developed "orders of creation" found in his student, Paul Althaus. In his systematic dogmatics, under the heading "Man as the Work of God," Schlatter stated that the person does not live "as an isolated individual," but only as a member of a community from which one originated, for "God reveals himself to us not as the creator of the individual, but as the Creator and Lord of his kingdom, which he creates through community and for community."³⁵ In this spirit Schlatter's commitment to the *Volk* was unequivocal:

There was no decision in my life, whether it was entering into the pastoral office or leaving that office for a career in academic work, whether the call to work in Germany or the call to Berlin, whether it be leaving Berlin and joining the Tübingen faculty; that was not shaped by my connection and obligation to our Volk. . . . Whether we are bound to our Volk by either birth or choice . . . all that we are comes from our Volk, hence the state has the firm right to demand from its members their lives.³⁶

others is less inflammatory, and concerned with Christian self-definition, not (in principle) defamation of Judaism. However, in practice it has included that and so is also intolerable" (ibid., 441–42). The "intolerable" nature of "theological anti-Judaism" in "practice" is precisely what Heschel, this author, and a growing number of scholars have sought to explicate by resisting any separation of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

³³ Schlatter's clearest statement on this matter is: "After all, Israel had rejected its Messiah, cast him out and crucified him. The Cross was the crowning act of Israel's disobedience, and the responsibility for it lay on every member of the people. For Jerusalem was not just an amorphous collection of isolated individuals, but a community. Every Jew was a member of the people of God, and therefore equally responsible towards him. Now the community had rejected its Messiah and stood self-condemned. Its fall was the fall of all" (*The Church in the New Testament Period* [trans. Paul P. Levertoff; London: S.P.C.K., 1955] 26–27).

³⁴ Morgan, "Susannah Heschel's Aryan Grundmann," 485.

³⁵ Adolf Schlatter, *Das christliche Dogma* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1911) 20. Schlatter also claims that "society is just as much a creation of God as man, who originates through nothing other than society. . . . Since we originate from parents, marriage and family are the foundation of society" (ibid., 65–66 [translation mine]). Althaus claimed Schlatter's dogmatic broadening of God's revelation provided his own theological development with a "powerful and joyous liberation" (Paul Althaus, "Adolf Schlatters Gabe an die systematische Theologie," in *Adolf Schlatter und Wilhelm Lütgert zum Gedächtnis* [ed. Paul Althaus; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1938] 31–40, at 33). For the close relationship between Althaus and Schlatter, see Hetzer, "Deutsche Stunde," 37–40.

³⁶ Adolf Schlatter, *Erlebtes. Erzählt von D. Adolf Schlatter* (Berlin: Furche, 1925) 8, 19.

Schlatter's religious and political tendencies were evident during his tenure in Berlin, where he maintained a close relationship with the controversial anti-Semite, Adolf Stoecker, whose friendship he considered the greatest benefit of his time in that city.³⁷ Following Stoecker, Schlatter promulgated the supersession of an atrophied Judaism by Christianity. Stoecker's attacks on the greedy and deceitful Jew as the true misfortune of Christian Germany echoed in Schlatter's later claim that the Jewish banker and rabbi formed the "pillars of Jewry."³⁸ Though repudiating racial hatred, Schlatter mirrored Stoecker in theologically grounding the Jew as the symbol of materialism and selfish egoism, thus considering them a danger to the spiritual character of Christian Germany.

Schlatter's *völkisch* loyalties could at times uncharacteristically border on racist tendencies. In the autumn of 1914, Schlatter attached his signature to the infamous proclamation "To the Cultural World," in which he and ninety-two other German academics voiced their support for the German war effort and defended military actions in Belgium. In countering the charge of breaking international law, the statement argued that "One has little right to deport oneself as a defender of European civilization if one would unite with the Russians and Serbs in offering the world the disgraceful spectacle of instigating the Mongols and Negroes against the white race."³⁹ Neuer claims Schlatter's signature should not be given too much weight, since he did not know the wording of the document. Although utilizing Wilfred Härle as a source, Neuer fails to relate that Härle stated that after the war all signatories were asked whether they still stood by the claims of their appeal. Sixteen responded and stressed their continued unconditional adherence to the document, including Adolf Schlatter.⁴⁰ On a more theoretical level, Schlatter could state: "Respect for race which honors the racially given barriers which it imposes, and the attention to the necessities set in place by nature that condition our *völkischen Lebens*, ought for every Christian to be self-evident."⁴¹ Despite the attempt by Schlatter's defenders to minimize any racist implications of such thinking, the role of nature's racial barriers certainly manifested itself in aspects of Schlatter's work in the final years of his life.⁴²

³⁷ Schlatter, *Rückblick*, 187. For Adolf Stoecker, see P. G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964) and Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics, and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870–1914* (trans. Noah Jonathan Jacobs; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975) 250.

³⁸ Adolf Schlatter, *Wir Christen und die Juden* (Essen-an-der-Ruhr: Velbert, 1930) 16.

³⁹ Quoted in Wilfried Härle, "Der Aufruf der 93 Intellektuellen und Karl Barths Bruch mit der liberalen Theologie," *ZTK* 72 (1975) 207–24, at 210 [translation mine].

⁴⁰ See Neuer, *Leben*, 564; Härle, "Aufruf," 214.

⁴¹ Adolf Schlatter, "Der Anteil der Christenheit an der Gestaltung unseres Volkstums," in *Gesunde Lehre. Reden und Aufsätze* (Essen-an-der-Ruhr: Freizeiten, 1929) 293–302, at 294–95 [translation mine].

⁴² Morgan, "Susannah Heschel's Aryan Grundmann," 483.

A close association with Grundmann's *Doktorvater*, Gerhard Kittel,⁴³ further marked Schlatter's political and anti-Jewish proclivities. Kittel's admiration for his predecessor is best illustrated in the dedication of his controversial *Theological Dictionary* to Schlatter.⁴⁴ Their deeply personal relationship nurtured a mutual respect that often led them to seek each other's counsel on a professional level. Schlatter's daughter testified:

Professor Kittel has presented all his concerns, his works, his questions to him [Schlatter], and obtained his advice. His scholarly essays and his lectures were talked through with my father, and they worked on them together. Professor Kittel's opinions were endorsed and the difficulties in this cooperation were fully understood. My father was anxious that the ties to the others should not be severed, but that an attempt should be made to guard against the bad. In this way, he, with his full sympathy, accompanied Professor Kittel on the road that he had to walk, up to the very last days before his death in May 1938.⁴⁵

Kittel's entrance into the Nazi Party caused no alienation; on the contrary, Kittel assisted with Schlatter's own theological work, including the notorious *Shall the Jew Be Victorious Over Us?*⁴⁶ Schlatter's anti-Jewish rhetoric bore common themes and language with the writings of Kittel, most notably the latter's infamous *Die Judenfrage*, in which the Jewish problem was seen as a "decadence problem."⁴⁷ Of no little significance is that while actively involved in Walter Frank's anti-Semitic *Reichsinstitut*, producing work that "corresponded to the worst of Nazi propaganda," Kittel was invited to be the memorial speaker at Schlatter's funeral⁴⁸—a fact omitted from Neuer's detailed description of the event.⁴⁹

Ambivalence shadowed Schlatter's confessional politics under the Third Reich.⁵⁰ A case in point was Schlatter's alienation from Dietrich Bonhoeffer; a rift related to the former's acceptance of the Aryan paragraph. This controversial paragraph based on new Nazi racial legislation, threatened Jewish Christian clergy with expulsion from their pulpits.⁵¹ Schlatter justified this controversial stand on the Jewish question

⁴³ Between 1930 and 1932, Grundmann was Kittel's teaching assistant. He defended his dissertation in 1931 (Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 534).

⁴⁴ See Kittel's preface in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. Gerhard Kittel; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964) 1:vii–ix, at ix. For the work's controversial nature, see Alan Rosen, "'Familiarly Known as Kittel': The Moral Politics of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*," in *Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes* (ed. Nancy A. Harrowitz; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) 37–50.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 516. See also Marikje Smid, *Deutscher Protestantismus und Judentum 1932/1933* (Munich: Kaiser, 1990) 256.

⁴⁶ Adolf Schlatter, *Wird der Jude über uns siegen? Ein Wort für den weihnachtszeit* (Essen-an-der-Ruhr: Freizeiten, 1935). For Kittel's assistance, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 516.

⁴⁷ Gerhard Kittel, *Die Judenfrage* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933) 24.

⁴⁸ Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler*, 70, 74.

⁴⁹ Neuer, *Leben*, 818–20.

⁵⁰ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 277.

⁵¹ For the Aryan paragraph, see Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, 1:272–73.

by asserting that “in this hour it is more important to maintain community with our German comrades than with the Jewish Christians.”⁵² Here Schlatter sacrificed confessional unity to nature’s barrier of racial distinctions, and limited, at least in this critical moment, genuine Christian community to adherence to the *Volk* and its laws. Intertwining God’s redemptive purpose with the life of the German *Volk* led Schlatter to distance himself from the Confessing Church. He refused to sign the Barmen Declaration, since to embrace God’s revelation apart from the *Volk* would force him to “close his Bible and separate his faith from his very being.”⁵³

While distrusting Nazi motives in the ecclesiastical sphere and in society in general,⁵⁴ Schlatter marched lockstep with the then pervasive spirit in academia by signing a Tübingen University proclamation asserting, “We are full of thanks to God that He, as the Lord of history, has given our *Volk* Adolf Hitler as our leader and savior out of our difficult problem.”⁵⁵ Attaching religious significance to Hitler’s regime was fully consistent with Schlatter’s desire for a unified “total state” that fought against selfish reservations, and a “total church” that embraced the divine order of a unified Christian *Volk*.⁵⁶ It was in this context that as late as Christmas 1935, Schlatter could thank the “present state leadership” for making its citizens sensitive to the indivisibility of church, *Volk*, and university community and protecting them from individualism.⁵⁷

Schlatter’s attempt to balance his *völkisch* loyalties with what he deemed confessional integrity prompted questions concerning his relationship to the German Christians.⁵⁸ While Schlatter’s overall theological premises certainly separated him from the more radical aspects of the German Christian movement, there were times in which he was not consistent in his criticism; and in one particular circumstance Grundmann was directly involved. Following the November 1933 Berlin Sports Palace debacle in which Reinhold Krause’s address to a German Christian audience crudely attacked the Old Testament, the Apostle Paul, and the cross as inappropriate Jewish symbols for the National Socialists, a mass exodus of members and a dismantling of leadership left the movement in disarray.⁵⁹ Leadership fell to the

⁵² Neuer quotes Schlatter in *Leben*, 750, but this matter it is omitted in his translated popular biography.

⁵³ Neuer, *Leben*, 765–66.

⁵⁴ Schlatter made this point in a number of private letters to his son Theodor; cf. Neuer, *Leben*, 725–36.

⁵⁵ Siegele-Wenschkewitz, “Adolf Schlatters Sicht des Judentum,” 96.

⁵⁶ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 544, points out the similarities between Grundmann’s *Totale Kirche im Totalen Staat. Mit einem Geleitwort von Landesbischof F. Coch* (Dresden: Oskar Günther, 1934) and Schlatter’s clearest expression of this motif in *Die neue deutsche Art in der Kirche* (Bethel bei Bielefeld: Verlagshandlung der Anstalt Bethel, 1933).

⁵⁷ Adolf Schlatter, “Adolf Schlatters letzte Weihnachtsansprache in der Tübinger deutschen christlichen Studentenvereinigung,” *Deutsche Theologie* 5 (1939) 182–87, at 185.

⁵⁸ For an excellent overview of the movement, see Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

German Christian Saxon and Thuringian wing to which Grundmann belonged, and the young theologian grabbed the ideological moment. He penned his earliest influential pamphlet in the form of *The Twenty-Eight Theses of the Saxon National Church*,⁶⁰ for the purpose of creating a fully Lutheran and fully National Socialist German church by uniting a racially *völkisch* message to the gospel.⁶¹ Despite their racist bent, Schlatter maintained that Grundmann's statements could be a foundation for the church, and though he thought some points problematic, he believed one should not "withhold Christian fellowship from a church that confesses this."⁶²

Such ambiguity explains why Schlatter's political sympathies were often a point of contention with various clergy, with one pastor very loyal to Schlatter complaining of being constantly confronted with the opinion that "Schlatter was the father of the German Christians."⁶³ A leading German Christian weekly, *Kommende Kirche*, referenced Schlatter more than any other contemporary German theologian.⁶⁴ Finally, a Tübingen teaching assistant remembered reading in school files, "Professor Schlatter is a convinced National Socialist." He burned the documents in the school's furnace.⁶⁵ While these various testimonies prove nothing other than perceptions by some of Schlatter's alignment with National Socialism, they establish that Grundmann's view of Schlatter was not unique.

Grundmann's affinity for Schlatter's theology found its most explicit expression in a 1937 article in *Kommende Kirche*⁶⁶ in which he spoke of the vibrant and joyous theology found in Schlatter's emphasis on the unity of nature and history. Grundmann had discovered a theology refusing to divide faith and fatherland. For Schlatter, "[God's] work is our *Volk*, [God's] work is our church. There is only one love that cannot be divided."⁶⁷ Here Grundmann found his path to National Socialism. Such *völkisch* nationalism, however, bound these two theologians together on a deeper level. Grundmann and Schlatter rooted the health of the *Volk* in adherence to Christianity, and both firmly believed a threat to the faith was a threat to the nation. This concern for Christian Germany fed their animosity toward Judaism, convincing them of its negative effect on German society.

⁶⁰ Theses are translated in J. S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933–1945* (New York: Basic, 1968) 353–57.

⁶¹ Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 547–48. *The Aryan Jesus*, 195–96.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 292.

⁶³ Rudolf Brezger, "Ein letzter Rückblick Adolf Schlatters auf seine Lebensarbeit," *Deutsche Theologie* 5 (1939) 176.

⁶⁴ Reijo E. Heinonen, *Anpassung und Identität. Theologie und Kirchenpolitik der Bremer Deutschen Christen 1933–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 155.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Schmid, "'Eine Insel des Friedens'. Die Jahre 1943–1945," in *Im Dienst an Volk und Kirche. Theologiestudium im Nationalsozialismus. Erinnerungen, Darstellungen, Dokumente und Reflexionen zum Tübinger Stift 1930 bis 1950* (ed. Siegfried Hermle, Rainer Lächele, and Albrecht Nuding; Stuttgart: Quell, 1988) 117–24, at 122.

⁶⁶ Walter Grundmann, "Adolf Schlatter. Ein Wort des Grußes und des Gedenkens." For a detailed examination of Grundmann's comments on Schlatter, see Heinonen, *Anpassung und Identität*, 154–59.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

From first to last, Adolf Schlatter's interpretation of Judaism structured his theology. In his early *Faith in the New Testament*, he clearly stated that the Jewish dynamic of identifying faith with obedience to legal demands militates against the gift of God, placing the actions of the individual at the controlling center of salvation. Such individualist achievement becomes the basis for Schlatter's accusation of selfish egoism, or "selfish desire." As a religion of selfish egoism and works-righteousness, Jewish piety created a worldly spirit at odds with God's redemptive purpose.⁶⁸ Such legalism produced a "religious type" that, while not limited to Judaism, found its paramount manifestation in the Jew in both the theological and secular sphere.⁶⁹ In this regard it is imperative to grasp the underlying unity of Schlatter's perspective toward the religious "*Talmudjude*" and the modern "secular" Jew. The Talmud's individualistic and legalist compulsion not only failed to protect from sin, but produced it, revealing its inability to protect the Jewish community from the influence of European society's materialism with its own undertow of individualistic selfish desires. Hence, for Schlatter, Talmudic piety was linked to Germany's modern secular Jewish problem.⁷⁰

The fruits of Schlatter's polemic against Jewish piety could be found in several popular pamphlets he authored which touched upon the social implications of Judaism in the years before and during the Third Reich. These brief works conveyed to a nonacademic audience Schlatter's polemics against the self-centered pride of the legalistic Jew, coupled with a pronouncement on the spiritual death of Judaism.⁷¹ Disparaging Jewish influence on society, he could speak of the "cowardly weakling, exploiter of the worker . . . , and the dolled-up woman" as manifestations of "walking according to the flesh," concluding that "what the young German calls 'Jewish' is all walking according to the flesh."⁷² With a touch of venom he could speak of the "soul-murdering poison" of the Jews within the German culture.⁷³ His descriptive language constructs an image of the Jew that can be accurately described as a quasi-metaphysical entity at odds with the German *Volk*, and in conflict with the

⁶⁸ Adolf Schlatter, *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament. Eine Untersuchung zur neutestamentlichen Theologie* (4th ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1927) 31. This interpretation of Judaism best illustrates the severely outdated character of his work. Samuel Sandmel's pointed comment that "with those Christians who persist in deluding themselves about Jewish legalism, no academic communication is possible" not only renders Schlatter obsolete, but also dampens the credibility of those reintroducing his position today. For Sandmel's remark, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 35.

⁶⁹ The best summary of Schlatter's thought in this regard is his 1930 lecture later published as a pamphlet, *Wir Christen und die Juden*.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 21. See also Adolf Schlatter, "Das Alte Testament und der Talmud," in *Das Alte Testament als Buch der Kirche* by Adolf Schlatter, Gerhard Schmidt, and Christian Stoll (Munich: Kaiser, 1934) 27–36, at 31–32.

⁷¹ See Schlatter, *Das Alte Testament*, 35.

⁷² Schlatter, *Die neue deutsche Art in der Kirche*, 12.

⁷³ Schlatter, "Das Ziel der Geschichte," in *Gesunde Lehre*, 350–55, at 352–53. For more on these works, see James McNutt, "Adolf Schlatter and the Jews," 361, 356.

God who brought that *Volk* into being. The Jew, for Schlatter, effectively became the “ontological enemy of God.”⁷⁴

Such theological grounding of secular society’s troubles enhances the significance of Werner Neuer’s emphasis on how Schlatter “kept his own times before his eyes,” and how his work “addressed at least indirectly the ecclesiastical and political situation that surrounded him.”⁷⁵ Joseph Tyson’s careful study of Schlatter’s handling of Luke-Acts confirms Neuer’s assertion, showing that Schlatter’s “understanding of Judaism in Germany in the twentieth century seems remarkably similar to his understanding of Judaism at the time of Jesus.”⁷⁶ Even as staunch a supporter as Robert Morgan has acknowledged that Schlatter’s theology contributed to the negative stereotyping of Jews, with his attacks on the secularism and individualism of assimilated Jews being absorbed into his critique of the Pharisees.⁷⁷ Such an anachronistic interpretation makes it imperative to read Schlatter with an eye to the contemporary societal state of affairs in which he would have been heard. Put simply, Schlatter’s assessment of Judaism as “ethical-metaphysical influences which have caused depravity,”⁷⁸ should give pause to anyone who attempts to view his work as an atemporal, theologically correct principle, since much of it was composed during a period when festering anti-Semitism foreshadowed closed swimming pools, theaters, restaurants, and “*Juda Verreckt*” scrawled throughout the city of Tübingen.⁷⁹

Schlatter unleashed his most aggressive attack on the Jews in the 1935 tract *Will the Jew Be Victorious Over Us?*⁸⁰ Though defenders such as Stuhlmacher and Neuer argue that the title is misleading and Schlatter was confronting Nazi racism, what in fact took place was that only weeks after the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws, he cast his lot with a widespread Christian polemic finding currency at the time. Uriel Tal and Stephen Haynes have detailed the proliferation by anti-Nazi theologians of a “Nazi as Jew” concept.⁸¹ For Haynes, “If a dominant characteristic

⁷⁴ For this phrase, see Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002) 274.

⁷⁵ Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter*, 150.

⁷⁶ Joseph B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1999) 64–65.

⁷⁷ Morgan, “Heschel’s Aryan Grundmann,” 481–82.

⁷⁸ Heinonen, *Anpassung und Identität*, 159.

⁷⁹ Martin Ulmer, “Radikaler Judenhaß. Zur nationalsozialistischen Judenpolitik in Tübingen,” in *Zerstörte Hoffnungen. Wege der Tübinger Juden* (ed. Geschichtswerkstatt Tübingen; Tübingen: Konrad Theiss, 1995) 99–119.

⁸⁰ For background on Schlatter’s tract, see Siegle-Wenschkewitz, “Adolf Schlatters Sicht des Judentum”; Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. 1, *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997) 165; Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews* (ed. and trans. Victoria J. Barnett; Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2000) 104–5; Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 305–18.

⁸¹ Uriel Tal, “On Structures of Political Theology and Myth in Germany Prior to the Holocaust,” in *The Holocaust as Historical Experience: Essays and a Discussion* (ed. Yehuda Bauer and Nathan

of interwar religious discourse was its penchant for stigmatizing the Nazi enemy with a 'Jewish' stain, this indicates that anti-Nazi authors knew instinctively that jewifying National Socialism would strengthen their case with the average German."⁸² *Will the Jew Be Victorious Over Us?* is significant in that a close reading finds Schlatter's theology as a whole permeating the entire document.⁸³ Its message firmly situates Schlatter in the anti-Jewish spirit of the period, and clearly shows the complicity of his theological convictions in the proliferation of anti-Semitic bigotry, despite his aversion to the Nazis. Finally, specific to the investigation at hand, the pamphlet reflects in microcosm not only Schlatter's distance from Grundmann's racism, but also their ultimate convergence on the nature of the Jew.

Schlatter contended that both the Jews and Nazis were seeking to "sweep the Christian message . . . from public view,"⁸⁴ further adding that the Jewish priests' and teachers' national selfishness (*nationalen Eigensucht*) was no different from that of "those who knew nothing higher than the racial soul" for both thought in a fashion that was *completely Jewish* (*vollständig jüdisch*).⁸⁵ In short, the Nazis' Aryan pride mirrored the Jews' claim to special election. With regard to the Nordic obsession with Jesus's racial heritage, Schlatter broke with Grundmann and would have nothing to do with "sniffing out Aryans in ancient Galilee."⁸⁶ Jesus was Jewish and bound himself to his people. Yet, in conformity with the "Nazi as Jew" logic, Schlatter posited the Jews themselves as the origin of this "drop of poison."⁸⁷ The rabbis' contention that Jesus was a product of the Roman Panthera's rape of Mary, thus precluding his Jewishness, was a lie bred of hate toward Christianity. For Schlatter, the Jews were hateful liars, not due to their race, but rather as a result of their religion.⁸⁸ Schlatter's polemic against the Jews' *religious* rejection of Jesus and the Nordics' *racial* rejection of a Jewish Jesus converged on Jewish moral deformity, essentially making the Nordics' problem not hatred of the Jew, but their "Jewishness" in rejecting Jesus.⁸⁹ The tract's anti-Jewish hatred, minimized by

Rotenstreich; New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980) 43–74, at 56. Stephen R. Haynes, "Who Needs Enemies? Jews and Judaism in Anti-Nazi Religious Discourse," *CH* 71 (2002) 341–67.

⁸² Haynes, "Who Needs Enemies?," 346.

⁸³ Consistent with the totality of Schlatter's work, the tract contains themes such as the regal mission of Jesus (13), Jewish selfishness (15), Jewish guilt in crucifying Christ (14, 17), and supersessionism (19).

⁸⁴ Schlatter, *Wird der Jude*, 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 14–15 [emphasis mine].

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁹ This same argument was made by Michael Cardinal Faulhaber, who "accused his religious opponents of repeating Jewish sins, since denying Jesus' Jewishness was a reenactment of the Gospel scene in which Jesus was attacked by (Jewish) crowds. Faulhaber also assailed Nazi racism by highlighting its 'Jewish' character: 'No nation ever insisted more on race and ties of blood . . . than the Israelites of the Old Testament.'" Haynes, "Who Needs Enemies?," 356.

Schlatter advocates today,⁹⁰ was not lost on the outspoken opponent of Nazism and anti-Semitism and future Righteous Gentile, Irene Harand. She castigated Schlatter, “who worked with lies,” and condemned the work as embodying the antithesis of justice and righteousness.⁹¹ While Grundmann would not have embraced Schlatter’s attitude toward the racial soul, he certainly shared his fundamental religious, social, and political hostility toward Jews and Judaism.

Despite Grundmann’s broad agreement with Schlatter on Jewish matters, his underlying disagreement with Schlatter was on the matter of Jesus’s racial heritage remains ostensibly problematic. Their differences were rooted in the divergent paths taken by European theologians during the eighteenth century regarding the question of Jesus’s racial relationship to the increasingly alienated Jewish community. One school sought to solve this issue by separating Jesus racially from Judaism, while another set Jesus’s teachings in radical opposition to fellow Jews.⁹² Grundmann chose the former path while Schlatter held firm to the latter. Yet, Heschel’s shifting of racial discourse from physicality and biology to spiritual qualities, allows us to delve deeper into the interconnectedness of these deviating theologies, and may help explain why Grundmann sensed no alienation from his mentor on this issue. Examination of their books on Jesus, published just three years apart, reveals a structural similarity in their presentations of Jesus’s conflict with Judaism, leading them to similar conclusions. As Heschel points out, Grundmann rooted his racial hostility to the Jews in their negative spiritual and moral attributes; thus his 1940 *Jesus the Galilean and Judaism*⁹³ contained an intense *religious* attack against the legalism manifest in the Pharisees. It was precisely the embodiment of religious failure which carried racial implications for Grundmann. Schlatter’s 1937 *Do We Know Jesus?*, reflected the same aggressive attack on the Pharisees’ *religion*, but his presupposition of Jesus’s essential Jewishness precluded any overt conclusions regarding race. Thus, despite divergence on the racial implications of Jesus’s struggle, Grundmann’s and Schlatter’s assault on Jewish piety followed a like-minded *religious* path to a common end: the moral condemnation and social ostracism of the Jews. In this regard, Schlatter’s legacy reveals that affirmation of Jesus’s Jewishness does not necessarily preclude Christian anti-Semitism.

⁹⁰ Oelschläger, *Judentum und evangelische Theologie*, 59. Robert Morgan’s assertion that an insufficient account of Schlatter’s theology nullifies Saul Friedländer’s description of Schlatter as a “Jew hater” on the basis of this tract, fails to see how the pamphlet is thoroughly consistent with Schlatter’s theology, and represents the intrinsic unity of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Morgan, “Heschel’s Aryan Grundmann,” 483.

⁹¹ Irene Harand, “Ein Priester, der die deutschen Juden beneidet,” *Gerechtigkeit* 4 (February 1936) 1. See also, Gershon Greenberg, “Irene Harand’s Campaign Against Nazi Anti-Semitism in Vienna, 1933–1938,” in *The Christian Responses to the Holocaust: Moral and Ethical Issues* (ed. Donald J. Dietrich; Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2003) 132–50.

⁹² Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998) 13.

⁹³ Walter Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1940).

One need not read far into Grundmann's *Jesus the Galilean Judaism* to find how Schlatter's exegetical work greatly influenced his young admirer. Grundmann refers to Schlatter more than any other New Testament scholar.⁹⁴ Grundmann's theological premises and polemical tone contain common threads of thought with Schlatter that would not be lost on contemporary readers. In his introduction, Grundmann maintains that the German *Volk's* awakening emerged from its struggle with the Jews who, by living "according to the Law," bred apathy to true German character and threatened to corrupt the nation. Defense against Judaism in all spheres of life, especially in the questions of religious life, was the highest priority; thus, Jesus's mission provided the truest spiritual model for contemporary Aryans in their struggle against Jewish power politics and moral degeneracy.⁹⁵

Grundmann understood the Law as the presupposition by which the Jews stressed their election and national identity before God, providing not only their salvation, but also their uniqueness and separation from all other humanity. Such a rigid embrace of the Law became the immediate cause for alienation from Jesus's message.⁹⁶ Here he followed Schlatter's now discredited perception of the nature of the Law and its role in varying Jewish expressions of their relationship to God. This skewed view accused the Jews of practicing a degenerate and loveless legalism, devoid of true morality, which excluded them from the world to come and made them worthy of death.⁹⁷ Their hostility to Jesus's religion of love prompted the struggle between Jesus and the Pharisees, who, in Grundmann's hands, came to symbolize the entirety of the Jewish faith and nation.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ His work has somewhat limited references to other scholarship. Schlatter was referenced thirteen times, with the next most frequent being Grundmann's own work eleven times.

⁹⁵ Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer*, 1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12–13, 16.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23–24. Cf. note 68, above. See also E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 274–81, where Sanders exegetically counters the position that the Pharisees were dominated by legalism and that Jesus's conflict was rooted in his rejection of such legalism and externalism. His overall conclusion is as follows: "A reading of Jewish material which is more or less contemporary with Jesus (that is, give or take 200 years) does not reveal the legalistic, externalistic Judaism which Jesus and Paul are believed to have criticized" (276). The importance of Sanders's correction in the context of Grundmann and Schlatter is cogently stated by Jacob Neusner: "Sanders takes up subjects with a virulent anti-Semitic tradition, and he has devoted his life to presenting Judaism in such a way as to help Christians overcome their ancient heritage of Jew-hatred and contempt for Judaism. This he has done not through apologetics for the Christian tradition of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism—he never says blatant anti-Semitism is anything other than what it is—but through a positive reading of the Judaism of the time and place of Jesus. . . . No scholar in our time, then, has done more in his chosen, important field to prevent a future Holocaust involving Christianity's inspiration and, in some countries, institutional complicity—not renegades like Hitler, but priests and bishops, German Christians and their pastors, professors of theology in the German universities, for instance—as did the one that took place in our own day" (Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament: What We Cannot Show, We Do Not Know* [Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994] x–xi).

⁹⁸ Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer*, 148–50.

Grundmann's Jesus was not just a non-Jew, but the anti-Jew.⁹⁹ Jesus was the Jews' greatest enemy,¹⁰⁰ and his call for peace and justice collided with Judaism's hate and pursuit of power. Emerging from non-Jewish Galilee and offering a religiosity in opposition to the legalistic Jerusalem Jews, Jesus's "Abba" experience revealed a divine-human encounter likened to the loving intimacy between father and child.¹⁰¹ This message fueled the violent instincts of the decadent and legalistic Jews, resulting in Jesus's terrible death.¹⁰²

Schlatter's last major work, *Do We Know Jesus?*, contained a final and concentrated expression of his lifelong attack on Judaism. He and others were passionate about the book's importance for the German church community, with Schlatter telling a friend that he wrote the book "for the sake of the *Volk*," and Schlatter's son calling it his "legacy."¹⁰³ Schlatter stressed the relevance of Jesus for Germany's current social circumstances, since to know him would serve to counter the paganism threatening German society, along with the "antichrists among us . . . [who] seek to suppress any memory of Jesus."¹⁰⁴ But who were the antichrists? Who were those embodying the spiritual and moral threat to the *Volk*? *Do We Know Jesus?* offered no overt attack on National Socialism, but rather a series of 366 daily commentaries on episodes of Jesus's ministry, especially those relating to his bitter conflict with the Jews. In understated fashion, Schlatter loyalist Hans Stroh lamented how the book's portrayal of the "*Jude*" revealed a lack of "solidarity between the Christians of 1937 and the hard-pressed German Jews."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, a close reading reveals an all-consuming diatribe against the religion and morality of the Jews, with nearly every possible negative stereotype exploding from the pages.¹⁰⁶ Echoing *Shall the Jew Be Victorious Over Us?*, Schlatter saw the Jewish

⁹⁹ Ibid., 153.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 152.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰² Grundmann followed Schlatter regarding Jewish violence. See *Aryan Jesus*, 159.

¹⁰³ Friedrich Bodelschwingh, "Um unseres Volkeswillen," in *Ein Lehrer der Kirche. Worte des Gedenkens an D. Adolf Schlatter, 1852–1938* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1938) 41–42, at 41. For Schlatter's son's comment see *Do We Know Jesus?*, 20.

¹⁰⁴ *Do We Know Jesus?*, 19. I thank Karen L. King for pointing out how Schlatter here reproduces the early Christian rhetoric of race, setting Christians as a race apart from Jews and pagans. King points to Denise Buell's work, which challenges the view that ethnicity and race were irrelevant to early Christians and seeks to destabilize the view that Christian universalism (which Schlatter would assert) is mutually exclusive with an ethnic particularism susceptible to anti-Judaism (Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2005] x, and esp. 94ff.).

¹⁰⁵ Quoted from the translated preface by Schlatter's former student, and a later advocate for Jewish-Christian dialogue (Hans Stroh, *Do We Know Jesus?*, 30).

¹⁰⁶ Stereotypes exploited by Schlatter in *Do We Know Jesus?* include: legalism and lack of any true Jewish spirituality (130, 143, 156–57, 159, 163, 181, 218, 252, 317); supersessionism and the nullification of Jewish religion (35, 42, 131, 136, 167–68, 352, 394); ethnic and national superiority (46, 52, 101–3, 172–73, 185, 197, 326, 358); personal selfishness and greed (96, 178, 187, 201, 217); and Jews as Christ killers (247, 287, 350, 369, 378).

type as embodying the worldview Christians were to reject, since their antipathy to Christ and selfish nationalism was one with Nazi mentality. The correlation of past and present was clear: “It was completely impossible for Peter and John to return to the rabbinate and the Talmud, so it is impossible for us to return with our ancestors to the warrior gods and to celebrate the festivals of their nature gods.”¹⁰⁷ *Shall the Jew Be Victorious Over Us?* provides us with the hermeneutic to grasp Schlatter’s ability, at least in his mind, to address the current religious, social, and political situation through the lens of Jesus’s conflicts with Judaism.

For Schlatter, to know Jesus is to know that he was an “atypical Jew,” in that he offered salvation to all. If he had arrogantly sought to impose his will on others and rule them, despising all who did not belong to his community, and if he had fashioned a God available only to him, then Jesus would be the very type of Jew he brought to judgment.¹⁰⁸ The Jews confronting Jesus bore negative spiritual characteristics which distinguished them qualitatively from non-Jews. Schlatter certainly suggests his ontological isolation of the Jew when he writes:

For there are people who do not understand even though they hear. The message does not make an impact on them. It does not seem relevant to what they do, and for this reason the message is barred from entering their souls. But are there really people, *even Jews*, who have nothing in themselves that attracts them to the message? They all know they are creatures. Should the creature not pay attention when the Creator addresses it? Do they not know what is good or evil, *and is this not true particularly of the Jews?* He was told what the Lord his God required of him, and he knew that his desire for what is good found fulfillment in God’s kingdom and that it brought an end to all evil. Yet all this can be repressed in a person’s inner being, *even if he is a Jew*.¹⁰⁹

As Schlatter continues, however, Jewish isolation becomes obvious. Jesus’s rejection in Capernaum reveals that the Jewish heart was unrepentant, “even less repentant than a Gentile heart,”¹¹⁰ and the Jews’ violent nature led to “unrestrained anger” issuing from “the wrath of man, *and not the wrath of just any man but that of a Jew*.”¹¹¹ During Jesus’s trial, the Jewish leaders’ hardheartedness would eventually lead them to sin against Jesus “in an even greater sense than Pilate.”¹¹² Although Schlatter avoids racial terms, a distinctive type of hardheartedness, violence, and sin mark the Jew. Schlatter’s “Jew” clearly bore qualities embodying an “otherness” segregating the Jew from non-Jews. Exposed here is the linkage of religious polemic to a social alienation at one with the current racist rhetoric, rendering meaningless any distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 567.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 116.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 178 [emphasis mine].

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 182.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 276–77 [emphasis mine].

¹¹² Ibid., 330.

Schlatter's emphasis on the selfishness of Judaism repeatedly surfaces throughout *Do We Know Jesus?*, creating a spiritual type at odds with the gospel. The Law bred the Jews' selfish character and for Schlatter the Law "was unable to create the unified community that was protected from decay."¹¹³ The Law sparked the individual's selfish will, which in turn created a slavish legalism that precluded not only belief in the Christ but also the capacity to love.¹¹⁴ When obedience to commands confers salvation, the individual becomes the center of divine-human encounter. Emphasis on self and faithful achievement fosters not only a disregard for others, but a pride and arrogance in the belief that God is on one's side.¹¹⁵ It is precisely this polemic which forms Schlatter's bridge from religious denigration to social and political criticism of the egocentric Jewish threat to a unified Christian *Volk*. The Pharisees propagated this attitude,¹¹⁶ corrupting themselves and the entire people, and Jesus's condemnation was emphatic: "Your nature is like what a snake passes on to its brood . . . you are not merely corrupt yourself; you corrupt the people. You must be avoided as one avoids a snake."¹¹⁷ By denouncing Jewish egoism as detrimental to love, Schlatter maintained to the end his conviction, articulated half a century earlier, of the decadence of Jewish piety and its capacity to infiltrate and decimate faithful human community.

Schlatter specified his attack on alleged Jewish legalism by sharply contrasting economic materialism and social responsibility. A stumbling block to the Jews' acceptance of Jesus was their "selfish desire" for possessions and treasures, for, "How was it possible to truly subject the Jews to God when they did not give up their pursuit of wealth?"¹¹⁸ The person captured by this false hope was driven by sensual desires, and the race for accumulation of essential and luxury items led to neglect of the poor.¹¹⁹ The Jew cared only about "preserving his property, and another's well-being was a matter of indifference" to him.¹²⁰ In contrast to those engaging in self-serving businesses that seek only advantage, tangible profit, and wealth, Jesus sent his disciples to the poor and in an act "completely counter to Jewish conventional wisdom and practice," he commanded that they take no compensation.¹²¹ Yet, continuing this economic theme, Schlatter injected into his vocabulary a term not found in the New Testament—parasites, but certainly well known by his German readership. Jesus's community avoids engaging in business, but "lives from the available food in the general population at large. It does so in

¹¹³ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 53–54.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 358.

¹¹⁶ "[T]he Pharisees blocked people's way to God, and the teachers of the Law by their scholarship choked out life" (ibid., 192).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 189–90.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 92.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 170.

¹²¹ Ibid., 295.

such a way *that is not open to the dishonorable charge of being idle parasites*.¹²² From a historical perspective one can only judge as untimely Schlatter's labeling as parasites those not effectively contributing to the *völkischen Gemeinschaft* especially in the context of business. Since the end of the nineteenth century, "parasitism" was a common description of the economic role of the Jews. Co-opting the biological imagery of symbiosis, where an organism drains life from the host, conservative *völkisch* thought cast the Jews as parasites on German society. Though detached from the economic and social realities of the vast majority of European Jews, who were in fact poor and somewhat isolated, this metaphor became widespread throughout Germany before and during the Nazi regime.¹²³ Whether or not in this particular case Schlatter was guilty of nothing more than a poor choice of words, what is certain is that his theological polemic could echo the anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish wealth, greed, and sexual perversion prevalent in the Reich. His pronouncements on "The Plight of the Jew"¹²⁴ carried a rhetorical flourish that could have been lifted from the Nuremberg Nazi, Julius Streicher's notoriously anti-Semitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer*:

[We are pointed] to the manner in which the Jew interfaces with other people. Are others safe from his greed? *It is uncertain that the other's wife is safe. Jewish greed seeks after her.* It is uncertain that the other's property is safe. Jewish greed seeks after it. . . . If . . . anything dedicated has value, it is not safe from the Jew.¹²⁵

Casting the Jew as an aggressive sexual threat moves beyond any meaningful confessional message. Such blatantly anti-Semitic writings are characteristic of Schlatter. His language sets him squarely within the poisonous spirit of the day.

Not only was Schlatter's Jewish community marked by greed, but also Jesus's passion revealed that there was no restriction on the Jews' hatred,¹²⁶ with his crucifixion the final act of acrimony.¹²⁷ The Jews "murdered" Jesus because he taught the truth of God, a truth they rejected, and for that rejection they were cut off from God.¹²⁸ Consistent with his lifelong emphasis on decide and Jewish corporate guilt, Schlatter assured his readers that Jesus "will not die as a result of a clash with the totally corrupt royal house. His struggle is not merely with Jewish riffraff such

¹²² Ibid., 297 [emphasis mine]. The original German reads "sondern lebt von dem, was in der völkischen Gemeinschaft an Lebensmitteln vorhanden ist, ohne dass sie dadurch in die schimpfliche Lage des müßigen Schmarotzers gerät" (*Kennen Wir Jesus?*, 268).

¹²³ Enzo Traverso, *The Jews and Germany: From the "Judeo-German Symbiosis" to the Memory of Auschwitz* (trans. Daniel Weissbort; Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska, 1995) 4; Klaus P. Fischer, *The History of an Obsession: German Judeophobia and the Holocaust* (New York: Continuum, 1998) 136–37.

¹²⁴ The heading for the August 4th reading (*Do We Know Jesus?*, 359).

¹²⁵ Ibid., 359 [emphasis mine].

¹²⁶ Ibid., 316.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 286.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 356–57.

as the Herodians; his confrontation is with all of Judaism.”¹²⁹ Though murdered by the collective will of hate-filled Jews, the good news remained: “The Gift of the Murdered One Is Eternal Life.”¹³⁰ Found here was no passing comment woven into the narrative, but rather the highlighted title for the August 9th devotional reading.

Schlatter’s coup de grâce against Judaism, and arguably the most damning expression of his anti-Semitism, was presenting the contemporary German with a Manichaen either/or: “Who should be honored: the Jew or God?”¹³¹ Jewish guilt and rejection “becomes total in that they toss Jesus aside. Judaism is what it wants to be: Jewish greatness, Jewish power, Jewish Kingdom.”¹³² This assertion is strikingly similar to a comment in *Shall the Jew be Victorious Over Us?*: “What they [the Jews] demanded of God, and thus also of Jesus, was the realization of their wants, their greatness, their victory, and the fulfillment of their national selfishness.” Schlatter continued, however: “How are such wishes different from those who know nothing higher than their racial soul?”¹³³ The earlier pamphlet’s blatant conjoining of Jew and Nazi was more tacitly affirmed by, but no less essential, to Schlatter’s message in *Do We Know Jesus?*: the Nazi racial paganism in league with the antichrist found embodiment in the Jew. Grasping this connection helps clarify Schlatter’s purpose in placing before his readers, no longer merely the murdered Jesus, the victimized “atypical Jew,” but an existential choice between two competing powers: the Jew or God. Schlatter’s Jew no longer simply provided a foil for his theological polemic, but emerged as the *embodied negation of God’s rule*, in essence, the “ontological enemy of God.”¹³⁴ In the shadow of the Third Reich, Schlatter’s either/or implicates him in radically alienating the Jews from the true character of German society and effectively erases any moral distinction between his theology and Nazi politics.

■ Conclusion

Failure by Schlatter’s supportive editors and translators to place him in the context of his time, together with a myopic reverence for confessional correctness, sustains and disseminates both flawed history and theology. Promoting Schlatter sets back Jewish-Christian dialogue and New Testament exegesis to pre-Holocaust years. It is sobering, to say the least, that in addition to poor historical contextualization of the literature at hand, Schlatter’s Evangelical advocates seem content in presenting him as a legitimate interpreter of ancient Judaism. In the end, however, no matter how some attempt to frame Schlatter as a reliable and provocative theologian, to offer his

¹²⁹ Ibid., 87.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 365.

¹³¹ The title of the August 1st reading (ibid., 354).

¹³² Ibid., 355.

¹³³ “Was sie aber von Gott und darum auch von Jesus verlangten, war die Erfüllung ihres Begehrens, ihre Grösse, ihren Sieg, die Vollendung ihrer nationalen Eigensucht. Was wollen die, die nichts höheres als ihre Rassenseele kennen, anderes?” *Wird der Jude*, 14–15.

¹³⁴ See n. 73, above.

vitriol under the guise of sound scholarship contributes, however unintentionally, to an all-too-common triumphalist fundamentalism that is a blood relative to intolerance and bigotry.

Evangelical efforts to resurrect Schlatter's legacy prove problematic at best when clearly his writings establish complicity in poisoning the atmosphere for Jews in Germany. When Schlatter's work is scrutinized against the backdrop of recent Holocaust historiography, a very damning truth about his theological legacy is bared. Susannah Heschel renders obsolete any attempt to isolate Schlatter theologically from the lethal racial history of the Third Reich. Heschel argues that it was not "biology" that was central to the racist theology of pre-Holocaust Germany, but rather a religious-racist discourse that joined accusations of an unchristian, degenerate moral spirit to the socially active, literal "embodiment" of that spirit in Jews. Speaking in Heschel's terms, one finds in Schlatter's final offering to his German people an "incarnational theology" given over to discerning and denigrating the Jews' spiritual characteristics, which were integral to their physical existence within German society. For him the Jew was not simply the bearer of wrong ideas about God nor a figure in the distant past who battled the Christ. No, for Schlatter the Jew bore in incarnate form, either by virtue of religious legalism, or by secular materialism, the deformities of selfishness, greed, pride, racial and national arrogance, and an incapacity for love. Heschel's conclusion that "What marks the distinction between Aryan and Jew, in the writings of the Institute members, is not physical appearance but spiritual and moral qualities"¹³⁵ has profound implications for Schlatter's theology. The incessant condemnation of Judaism's moral and spiritual failure called for the eradication of such maladies from the German *Volk*. Schlatter certainly sought a spiritual, not a violent solution, but readers predisposed to racist ideology, and even violence, could easily find in Schlatter an authoritative Christian voice expressing the litany of Jewish vices found in the likes of Grundmann. As the corrupted Jew's embodiment violated the racial orders of God's creation in the minds of racist theologians, the corrupted Jew's embodiment violated the spiritual orders of God's creation in Schlatter's mind. Whether rooted in racial hate or spiritual condemnation, the Jew became the *ontological negation* of a specific divine order venerated by each. Clearly, Walter Grundmann had valid reasons for finding in Schlatter a mentor whose work opened the way for theologians to embrace aspects of the National Socialist agenda. However sincere the confessional motivation, Schlatter's assault on Judaism falls under the indictment of Heschel's study, revealing the Tübingen professor's complicity in bridging anti-Jewish polemic and virulent racial hatred.

¹³⁵ *The Aryan Jesus*, 286.