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### PROJECT

## The Secularized Study of the Abrahamic Religions in the Nineteenth Century

I intend to study the complex interaction between distinct scholarly, religious and national traditions in the nineteenth century. My project will focus on the emergence and confluence of several historical disciplines in the age of the research university: Jewish Studies (Wissenschaft des Judentums), Orientalism and the scholarly study of Christianity (in particular early and late ancient Christianity). I take these disciplines as special cases in the broader story of the birth of the historical, comparative and secular study of religions (Religionswissenschaft) and the invention of the concept of "world religions". I shall seek to evaluate the extent to which the modern academic study of religion succeeded in freeing itself from its roots in Christian theology, be it Protestant or Catholic.

There is a distinct, but commonly ignored Jewish chapter in the history of the comparative study of the Abrahamic religions, and it will be one of the main foci of my research. Suffice it here to mention the long chain of Jewish Orientalists, from Abraham Geiger's epoch-making studies of the Jewish impact on Muhammad and his theory regarding Jesus's proximity to the Pharisees to Ignaz Goldziher, probably the most impressive of all modern Islamicists.

Side by side with the Jewish scholars of Christianity and Islam, I intend to focus on three towering nineteenth-century scholars of religion: Ernest Renan, Julius Wellhausen and William Robertson Smith. They represent three major European intellectual cultures, with their different traditions of Orientalism and of theology. All three were also major scholars of Ancient Israel, yet while they were quite well equipped to launch the modern comparative study of the Abrahamic religions, they stopped short of doing so. And all three scholars, owing to their ambivalence towards the orthodoxies of the various Churches into which they were born and the religious cultures in which they were educated, ran into deep conflict with religious and academic authorities, in each case with dramatic impact on their career.

### Recommended Reading

Stroumsa, Guy G. *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010 (on the historical background of my current research).

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PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Stroumsa, Guy G. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2016)

The scriptural universe of ancient Christianity

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=857603418>

Stroumsa, Guy G. (2015)

The scholarly discovery of religion in early modern times

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=86478113X>

Stroumsa, Guy G. (Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.], 2010)

A new science : the discovery of religion in the Age of Reason

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=61163225X>

Stroumsa, Guy G. (Chicago [u.a.], 2009)

The end of sacrifice : religious transformations in late antiquity

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Fin du sacrifice <engl.>

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Stroumsa, Guy G. (New York [u.a.], 1999)

Dream cultures : explorations in the comparative history of dreaming

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=243543158>