Once Wrede convincingly showed that the Gospel of Mark was not a literal, factual description of what Jesus said and did, in his 1901 book *The Messianic Secret* (but that it, like the other Gospels, had incorporated its own literary and theological concerns into its account), the cottage industry of Historical Jesus books pretty much collapsed. Its entire foundation had for decades been built on the assumption that even if the other Gospels were not completely historical, but theologically biased, Mark was not. Wrong. It was.

Contributing significantly to the collapse of this academic venture was the first full account of its history, Albert Schweitzer’s classic, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, produced five years later, and still very much worth reading. As I have mentioned, Schweitzer discussed virtually all of his predecessors, starting with the first critical/historical attempt to figure out what Jesus really said and did (i.e., an account that didn’t simply think the Gospels were inspired and flawless in their reporting, but needed to be examined critically to establish the historical reality behind them) – Hermann Samuel Reimarus’s *The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples*, in the 1770s.

Schweitzer goes scholar by scholar, summarizing their accounts, down to Wrede himself, and more or less eviscerating their views with a perspicacity, critical insight, and rapier-like wit that had almost never been seen before. Among other things, Schweitzer showed that ...

To see what Schweitzer showed, and to realize its stunning importance, you will need to belong to the blog. Unless you want to read the entire Quest of the Historical Jesus yourself. You should do that too. But why not join the blog in the meantime? It won’t cost much and all proceeds go to charity. You gain tons and no one loses!

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*[If the Quest for the Historical Jesus Failed... What Then? Wrede’s Revolutionary Claim about the “Messianic Secret”]*