Schleiermacher’s contribution to the picture of Jews and Judaism cannot be overestimated. Although several leading theologians had already stressed what they regarded as a problematic relationship between Judaism and the Old Testament on the one hand and Christianity on the other, it was Schleiermacher’s dominant role that brought such ideas to prominence in German Protestantism.1 Besides his doctrinal and hermeneutical teaching, Schleiermacher taught on the New Testament, ethics and church history. After his death, his works on philosophy and hermeneutics became highly influential, as did his views on Judaism. His writings also included a widespread New Testament Introduction.

Schleiermacher is likely to have become acquainted with Herder’s theology during his studies,2 and he encountered Semler’s theology in Halle.3 Although he has sometimes been described as an autodidact Neu-
testamentler, Schleiermacher was probably dependent on Semler as well as J. D. Michaelis for his overall perspective regarding New Testament exegesis and theology. Schleiermacher’s background was in Herrnhut circles, and he was originally destined to become a preacher within this movement. The Pietism of Zinzendorf included a philosemitic stance,4 expecting the fulfilment of Paul’s words that “the whole of Israel shall

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1 The texts by Schleiermacher used below are normally quoted from Friedrich David Ernst Schleiermacher, Friedrich David Ernst Schleiermacher. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. Hans-Joachim Birkner, et al., Quellenschriften zur Protestantismus (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984–). For a fresh introduction to Schleiermacher and his relationship to Judaism, see Beckmann, Die fremde Wurzel, 31–135, where Schleiermacher and his view of the Old Testament and the Jews are discussed at length. I am greatly indebted to Beckmann’s work for this presentation, which is limited to Schleiermacher’s view of the Jews. For an introduction to Schleiermacher at large, see Terence Tice, The Schleiermacher Bibliography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

2 Beckmann, Die fremde Wurzel, 45. Beckmann notes a number of affinities and similar formulations in Herder and Schleiermacher, 45–47.


be saved” (Rom. 11:26). However, Schleiermacher would break with this, just as he definitely broke with his Herrnhut past in Halle.5

Having read Semler on Judaism, the study of Schleiermacher often gives a sense of *déjà vu*, even as Schleiermacher develops his own theology. The overall approach is familiar, including freedom from the dogmatic system of the Church, the critical approach to classic theology and the canon, the focus on ‘private religion’, and the tension between universalism and particularism. Although a genetic connection between Schleiermacher’s and Semler’s thinking has been disputed, more so in the past than today,6 it seems clear that Schleiermacher takes up, and furthers, insights from the same research tradition and religio-philosophical tradition.7 This also concerns the place of Jews and Judaism in his thinking. Like Semler, it is important for Schleiermacher to draw a line between Christianity on the one hand, and Judaism and paganism on the other, and in the work of both authors, Judaism is marked by its narrow particularism.8

Nevertheless, Schleiermacher sketched a universal perspective of religion that had quite a different scope to those of earlier theologians. Schleiermacher’s works *Über die Religion: Reden an die gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (“Speeches on Religion”), *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* and *Glaubenslehre* came at a time that is said to have revolutionised religion, his studies coinciding with the French Revolution, to which he was sympathetic,9 and with the Napoleonic aggression in Prussia, against which Schleiermacher was an ardent preacher.10

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5 Thomas Lehnerer, “Religiöse Individualität. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834)”, in *Profile des neuzzeitlichen Protestantismus. Band 1. Aufklärung, Idealismus, Vormärz*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1990), 176; Beckmann, *Die fremde Wurzel*, 47. This need not mean that he did so in every respect; the ‘psychologising’ piety of his background found a new expression in his Romanticism, Beckmann, *Die fremde Wurzel*, 41.

6 See Beckmann, *Die fremde Wurzel*, 48 with extensive literature.

7 For this discussion, see Hornig, “Schleiermacher und Semler. Beobachtungen zur Erforschung ihres Beziehungsverhältnisses”, which convincingly shows the affinity between the two. My interest, however, does not lie in the genesis of certain ideas, but in studying the research tradition.

