FRANZ DELITZSCH:
PIONEERING SCHOLARSHIP IN JUDAISM

From the 1870s, salvation-historical Protestant interest in exegesis and the Jews entered a new phase, in which the triad scholarship in Judaism—a rather conservative-Protestant-Biblicist standpoint—and missions to Jews were part of the same parcel. This new focus on research within Judaism meant a decisive new step in a research tradition that would first inspire a range of exegetes of a conservative Lutheran or Biblicist brand, and later New Testament scholarship at large when occupied with Jewish studies. The triad can be found in Adolf Schlatter—who, although sometimes regarded as a scholarly outsider, is nevertheless a scholar with much in common with Delitzsch and Strack—as well as in Rudolf and Gerhard Kittel. The base was the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig, founded in 1886 by Franz Delitzsch, as the continuation of a work started as early as in the 1870s, and a main propagator of

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1 The point that Delitzsch invested the most interest and prestige in was the question of the Pentateuch, where Delitzsch’s position satisfied neither the conservatives nor the historical-critical camp, Siegfried Wagner, Franz Delitzsch. Leben und Werk, Monographien und Studienbücher (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1991), 209–225; Siegfried Wagner and Arnulf Baumann, “Franz Delitzsch, Scholar and Missionary”, Mishkan 1 (1991), 49.


3 Wiese, Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Ein Schrei ins Leere?, 305, notes that the influence of Delitzsch and Strack eventually resulted in a new course of scholarship in relation to Wissenschaft des Judentums, e.g., with Gerhard Kittel and Strack’s disciple Paul Fiebig. Delitzsch’s conversion took place in 1832, see Wagner, Franz Delitzsch. Leben und Werk, 120, according to whom Delitzsch had a strong Lutheran profile, 122.

4 Deines, Die Pharisäer. Ihr Verständnis im Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz, 39 n. 94; “wissenschaftliche Außenseiter”, 405.

5 Gerhard Kittel studied under Johannes Leipoldt in Leipzig, in Berlin where Strack was the leading Christian scholar of Judaism, in Greifswald (Dalman), and with Schlatter in Tübingen, Ibid., 412.

its ideas was the journal Saat auf Hoffnung. This was only three years after the creation of the Institutum Judaicum in Berlin by H. L. Strack. After Delitzsch’s death, the Leipzig institute was renamed Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum.


Heinrichs, “Das Bild vom Juden in der protestantischen Judenmission des Deutschen Kaiserreichs. In Umrisse dargestellt von ‘Saat auf Hoffnung. Zeitschrift für die Mission der Kirche und Israel’”, 200. The prehistory of the institute is longer, Delitzsch having started to teach in 1871 at what was called the Institutum Judaicum. However, this was basically Delitzsch’s private enterprise, since the Centralverein für die Mission unter Israel—the base for the work, which was located on the premises where the institute started out and had its first library—had not been able to recruit another teacher, Völker, “Franz Delitzsch als Förderer der Wissenschaft vom Judentum”, 96. From 1880 onwards, interest in the work grew, and in 1886 Delitzsch’s vision was realised in an institute with five teachers and an ambitious programme of lectures in languages, the Talmud and Midrash, and the New Testament read in the light of this literature, as well as Jewish polemics and missions to Jews, Völker, “Franz Delitzsch als Förderer der Wissenschaft vom Judentum”, 97.