The Theological faculty of Greifswald’s university has a special reputation for Old Testament studies. One may think about personalities like Julius Wellhausen in the 19th century, and Leonhard Rost and Alfred Jepsen among others in the 20th century. The faculty also houses an institute of its own, that has occupied a prominent place since its founding in February 1922, and since 1925 has borne the name of Gustaf Hermann Dalman who on June 9th of that same year celebrated his 70th birthday. This anniversary was celebrated by him not in Greifswald, but in Jerusalem, surrounded not only by representatives of the German consulate and of the American and the British Archaeological Institutes, as well as by an Austrian prelate and by the vicar of the Latin Patriarchate, but also by scholars like Samuel Klein (1886–1940) and Joseph Klausner (1874–1958). It seems, therefore, quite appropriate to honour Hugh Williamson, not only one of the leading exegetes of the Old Testament, but also a specialist on land and literature of the Persian period with Jerusalem as its focus, with the following brief portrait of a quite unusual and—in spite of his conservative position—pioneering personality.

I. Mission among the Jews and Holy Land Studies

Dalman’s vita has been described quite exhaustively by Julia Männchen. We will concentrate on the inner motives of his life and work and their

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1 See Julia Männchen, Das Herz zieht nach Jerusalem. Gustaf Dalman zum 150. Geburtstag (Greifswald/Putbus: Rügendruck, 2005), 16–18.
interrelation. The two factors that determined Dalman’s path, and to which he reacted in his own unique way, made him a personality with a high profile. On the one side lies the fact that he is, by birth and education, related to the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine; while on the other side, lie his exchanges with Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890), head and inspiring teacher of a widespread conservative school of biblical exegetes. Both factors play a key role for Dalman, although not in the sense of simple “influence,” but also as challenges to which Dalman responded with a distinctive independence.

The influence of the Herrnhut pietistic community is obvious at first glance when perusing Dalman’s biography. Born June 9th, 1855, in the Herrnhut center Niesky, educated at the local Pædagogium and having pursued his formation at the theological seminary in Gnadenfeld, he immediately was engaged there as lecturer from 1881 until 1887. He increasingly freed himself from the particular restrictions of his surroundings and at last left Gnadenfeld for Leipzig. Nonetheless his affiliation with the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine gave him an access to Jews and Judaism quite different from that which was typical within Germany in those days—an access that was characterized by self-critical affinity as well as by critical distance.

With respect to Franz Delitzsch, already as a grammar school pupil Dalman had sought contact with him by trying to translate the Gospel into Hebrew. Delitzsch, the conservative Lutheran, not only became for Dalman in his Hebrew studies “my best counsellor,” but also accompanied him as early as in his Gnadenfeld period and paved his way to the mission among the Jews and to academic life at Leipzig University when Dalman left the Brüdergemeine. After intensive contact by way of letters and personal encounters Delitzsch installed in 1887 the then 32 year-old Dalman as lecturer at the seminary of the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig, founded some seven years earlier. Delitzsch had already introduced him to the academic world of Leipzig University, where in 1883 he submitted his study entitled “Traditio rabbinorum veterrima de librorum Veteris Testamenti

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5 Dalman, Religionswissenschaft der Gegenwart, 26.