

Appendix III: A Note on the German Translation of *The Constancy of Israel*

Twenty-six years after Bennett's first book was published, Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Wagner translated it into German as *Israel's Beständigkeit: Eine unbefangene Beleuchtung mehrerer wichtiger Bibelstellen* (Darmstadt: Johann Philipp Diehl, 1835). Wagner, a popular theologian and schoolmaster living in Darmstadt, died that same year. Besides his pedagogic and pastoral activities, he was chiefly known as the author of a widely read religious book titled *Lehren der Weisheit und Tugend in Fabeln, Erzählungen und Liedern* (1792), which had already appeared in sixteen editions by the time of his death and was distributed in hospitals by charitable organizations. He published many other popular works, including a biography of Buffon translated from the French.¹

What motivated Wagner to translate Bennett's work? He tells us that he had read an essay on Bennett and his works by the distinguished theologian and biblical scholar Anton Theodor Hartmann (1774–1838), professor of Old Testament theology at Rostock,² which appeared in December 1833 in the *Leipziger Literatur Zeitung*. It was the featured essay of the issue, and Hartmann devoted it to the Jewish author's writings, accurately summarizing the content of all his writings up to 1833. Wagner was duly impressed and felt the need to expose the German reader to *The Constancy of Israel*.

For Wagner, the translation was justified because it offered valuable information in the context of the possible emancipation of the Jews of Germany. It also provided a clear sense of the kind of arguments Jews could make in response to the missionaries, who were required to engage with those arguments to succeed in transforming the Jewish heart: "If one considers how in our days the emancipation of the Jews is taking place both in and out of the German fatherland and

1 On Wagner, see Philippe Sander, "Wagner, Friedrich Ludwig," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 40 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1896), 494–495, online at <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz84220.html#adbcontent>, and the background information in the German Wikipedia entry "Friedrich Ludwig Wagner (Theologe)," January 18, 2023, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Ludwig_Wagner_\(Theologe\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Ludwig_Wagner_(Theologe)).

2 On Hartmann, see Gustav Moritz Redslob, "Hartmann, Anton Theodor," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 10 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1879), 680–681, online at <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz26227.html#adbcontent>. A complete list of his scholarly works is found in the German Wikipedia entry "Anton Theodor Hartmann," April 13, 2023, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Theodor_Hartmann.

in other countries [. . .] this little work by Bennett should rightly demand the attention of governments as well as the estates, theologians as well as laity.” And earlier: “Our industrious proselyte makers receive here much rich material for reflection and learn the direction in which they must direct their attacks in order to overcome the stubborn Jewish heart.”³ In the latter statement he paraphrases Hartmann himself:

A detailed acquaintance with the Jewish controversial theology, with the Jewish method of interpretation and the religious way of thinking of the Jews, brought about by deeply rooted ideas faithfully propagated in education and teaching are necessary weapons if the fight is to succeed better than it has hitherto. In general, it is a very important regret that our tirelessly busy missionaries hardly ever report the doubts and objections that both pagans and Jews raise against the historical and dogmatic part of Christianity, or only do so in a cursory and abbreviated manner. If this were to be done in detail, the pitfalls on which the well-intentioned and so eagerly pursued efforts of our converts usually fail would be more happily avoided [. . .] with a deeper influence on the heart and mind.⁴

What is interesting is that Wagner’s reference to the debate regarding Jewish emancipation has no parallel in Hartmann. On the contrary, before his death Hartmann wrote several pamphlets against the emancipation of the Jews, to which the well-known Reform rabbi Gotthold Salomon replied in 1835.⁵ According to Hartmann, learning about Jews and Judaism from Bennett was justified only to arm the missionary so he might succeed in his holy task. His admirer Wagner obviously felt otherwise.

³ Wagner, introduction to Salomon Bennett, *Israel's Beständigkeit: Eine unbefangene Beleuchtung mehrerer wichtiger Bibelstellen*, trans. Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Wagner (Darmstadt: Johann Philipp Diehl, 1835), 10, 6.

⁴ Wagner, introduction to Bennett, *Israel's Beständigkeit*, 6–7. See Hartmann’s essay, “Nachricht für alttestamentliche Philologen,” *Leipziger Literatur Zeitung* 2, no. 57 (December 1833): 473–476, at 473: “Es ist überhaupt sehr zu bedauern, dass unsere unermüdet geschäftigen Missionarien die Zweifel und Einwürfe, die sowohl Heiden als Juden gegen den geschichtlichen und dogmatischen Theil des Christenthums vorbringen, in ihren Berichten fast nie der nur mit abkürzender Flüchtigkeit mittheilen. Geschähe dieses in ausführlicher Darlegung, so würden die Klippen, an welchen die gut gemeinten und so eifrig verfolgten Bemühungen unserer Bekehrer gewöhnlich scheitern, glücklicher vermieden, und die Punkte leichter aufgefunden werden, au Zweyter Band.” The essay by Hartmann is online at <https://archive.org/details/s2id13403950/page/n761/mode/2up>.

⁵ For Gotthold Salomon’s debate with Hartmann over his opposition to emancipation, see Gotthold Salomon, *Briefe an Herrn Anton Theodor Hartmann [. . .]: Über die von demselben aufgeworfene Frage: Darf eine völlige Gleichstellung in staatsbürgerlichen Rechten sämmtlichen Juden schon jetzt bewilligt werden?* (Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1835).

In any case, Hartmann's relatively long essay on Bennett, at least in this one instance, publicized his written work in German lands and must have gratified him when it appeared in a reputable journal written by a serious theologian of Christianity. The German translation of his work, finished a year before his death, must have pleased him even more.

