

Otto Lenel (1849-1935)

Prof. Dr. iur. Otto Lenel (*13.12.1849 Mannheim †07.02.1935 Freiburg/Brszg.); parents: Moritz Lenel (1811-1876), Carolina Scheuer (1814-1857); siblings: Pauline (1837-1895), Viktor (1838-1917, Industrieller), Antonie (1839-1912), Alfred (1841-1918), Thekla (1845-1911); married to: Sarah Luise Eberstadt (1857-1940); children: Paul (1884-1918), Rudolf (1886-1986), Berta (1882-1973).

Otto Lenel was born on December 13th 1849 in Mannheim, as the sixth child of Moritz Lenel and Caroline Scheuer. He was married to Sarah Louise Eberstadt (1857-1940) and had three children, Paul, Rudolf and Berta. Otto Lenel was one of the most important legal historians of Roman law.



His importance in the field of Roman law, in particular the discovery of later interpolations of the original classical texts was outstanding. In particular, he investigated the reconstruction of the perpetuum Edictum and Palingenesia. His works are regarded up to this day as decisive in this field.

From 1885, Otto Lenel taught and lived in Strasbourg. In 1907 he received a call to Freiburg. In 1929, on his 80th Birthday, he was honored with a congratulatory address, in which 20 countries of different continents and 100 universities took part. But in 1933, the honorary citizen of the city of Freiburg, felt the impact of Nazi racial policy. His daughter was ousted from her job as a nurse, and his grandson was denied the right to live in the country, for which his late father and grandfather had risked their lives in the battlefield. These heavy blows broke the old man. For the last one and a half years of his life he could no longer devote himself to

science. On February 7th 1935, he died. According to his wish he was buried in silence and no eulogy was published in Germany. His widow (aged 83) and his daughter were deported in October 1940 to the Gurs concentration camp in France, where the widow died.

On the 50th anniversary of his death on February 7th 1985, a memorial plaque was unveiled at his last residence, a house in Holbein Strasse 5 in Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany).

Sources: Beiträge zur Freiburger Wissenschafts- und Universitätsgeschichte, 13. Heft: Freiburger Professoren des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, hrsg. von Johannes Vincke (1957), S. 77ff.: Elmar Bund, Otto Lenel (insbes. S. 99), und 15. Heft: Aus der Geschichte der Rechts- und Staatswissenschaften zu Freiburg i. Br. hrsg. v. H.J. Wolff (1957), S. 115ff.: Fritz Pringsheim, Römisches Recht in Freiburg nach 1900 (insbes. S. 126); s. ferner Sinzheimer, S. 97ff., insbes. S. 110; NDB 14 (Bund); Kürschner 1931, 1935; Paul Sauer, S. 258f.f; Göppinger, Horst, Juristen jüdischer Abstammung im "Dritten Reich", München 1990, 2. Auflage; <http://mitglied.lycos.de/Brisgovia/id71.htm>

Thal, December 14th, 2010, B. Lenel (beat@lenel.ch)