

Geschichte der jüdischen Apologetik als Vorgeschichte des Christenthums  
M. Friedländer

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The author of this volume has made himself favorably known by a series of interesting studies all dealing more or less directly with the connection between the Judaism of the diaspora and Christianity. The first of these, *Patristische und Talmudische Studien*, appeared as far back as 1878, and then, after a considerable interval, the same line of investigation was further pursued in *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Christenthums, ein Excurs von der Septuaginta zum Evangelium*, 1894; *Das Judentum in der vorchristlichen griechischen Welt, ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Christenthums*, 1897; *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus*, 1898; *Der Antichrist in den vorchristlichen jüdischen Quellen*, 1901. The two fundamental views running through all these publications are, on the one hand, that Christianity was not only formally but materially indebted to the Judaism of the diaspora, inasmuch as some of its characteristic formative ideas were anticipated by the latter, such as that of freedom from the ceremonial law; and, on the other hand, that gnosticism existed in a well-developed form within the fold of Judaism considerable time before the rise of Christianity, indeed as far back as the time of writing of some of the Canonical Psalms, the Zedim mentioned in which are none other than gnostics. These two positions are reaffirmed with considerable emphasis in the present volume, though here they are formulated more cautiously than in the previous treatises, no doubt owing to the criticism brought against them in their original less guarded form. But these views appear here in a larger setting, since the author attempts nothing less than to give a history of Jewish Apologetics in the widest sense of the word. The apologetic attitude is according to him the very essence of the mind of the Judaism of the diaspora, since this branch of Judaism had awakened to the consciousness of the uniqueness and absoluteness and universalistic destiny of its religion, and was in the entire range of its literary production controlled by the intent to assert and defend its claims as such. To write the history of this Apologetics is to the author's view practically equivalent to writing the spiritual history of this branch of Judaism itself, since the struggle for life, as it is biologically and evolutionistically put, is the secret of the life's development. We own to having felt a certain disappointment in reading the book, because the execution hardly comes up to this magnificently, if somewhat one-sidedly, conceived programme. Friedländer's presentation of things moves too much along the line of an analysis and discussion of the single writings, and has too little of detachment on the author's part from the sources to satisfy the claims of a truly historical treatment even in a subject where so much of the historic life runs in literary channels. A further objection that may be made to the book is that it forces into the category of Apologetics practically the whole extra-canonical literature of Judaism belonging to the period dealt with. While in a case like that of the Sibylline writings and the works of Josephus and the older quasi-historical productions this is the true point of view, it is hardly correct to apply this to the Apocalyptic literature, as the author attempts to do. Here certainly the apologetic motive was entirely secondary, and to place it in the foreground necessarily results in giving a distorted view of the character and aims of this class of writings. With reference to the influence of the freer tendencies of the diaspora-Judaism upon the Christian religion, two things might be said. On the one hand, Friedländer still overestimates the extent to which emancipation from the literal observance of the Mosaic law had been carried among the Jews in Egypt and elsewhere. Though it cannot be denied that an antinomian party existed, there is no ground to believe that it was in any sense influential. It has been correctly observed that even a man like Philo, who goes so far in his allegorizing, spiritualizing evaporation of the intent of the Mosaic law, still firmly insists upon the

observance of the letter as of coordinate importance with the apprehension of the spirit. On the other hand, the author does not make clear how he conceives in the concrete of the channel through which this law-free spirit affected the origin of Christianity. Some of his statements read as if he considered the latter a direct product of the former. But he has not shown that Jesus was or could have been subject to any influence from this quarter. After all that has been said, it still is true that Christianity is the creation of Christ, so that, unless Christ can be brought into vital connection with the ideas or spirit of the diaspora, this hypothesis lacks all support. If on the other hand, the influence of this factor is found at a later stage of the history of primitive Christianity, say in Stephen or Paul, then this involves the admission that at the utmost it can come under consideration as a secondary factor, since at any rate the main impulse toward emancipation from the law must have come to them from Jesus, if the history of early Christianity is to possess any true continuity at all. Apart from this, the author seems to us to overlook the immense difference between the most enlightened and emancipated diaspora-Judaism and Christianity from a soteriological point of view. The soteriological principle is almost entirely absent from this type of Judaism. In Christianity it is central from the beginning, as may be seen from this that the standpoint of freedom from the law is, most clearly in Paul, reached through a soteriological process. Not in the negative feature which they have in common, but in the positive principle which in each case underlies and explains the negation consists the essence of Judaism and Christianity respectively.

It is a decided merit of the author that he has once more called attention to the presence of a gnosticizing element in pre-Christian Judaism. Undoubtedly he goes too far in interpreting everything said about the Minim of these Jewish gnostics, in finding them everywhere, where any radical form of opposition to orthodox Judaism is spoken of, as, e.g., in the Zedim of the Psalms, and in explaining from this gnostic movement in Judaism the development of the idea of the antichrist. Nevertheless, even in the reduced sense in which Friedländer's theory will have to be taken in order to stand, it is of far-reaching importance for the problem of the gnostic views attacked in some of the New Testament writings, especially certain Pauline Epistles. If the author's theory can be substantiated in any degree at all, the polemic against gnosticizing views can no longer be considered a mark of post-Apostolic origin.

The entire question of explaining Christianity as a specific form of the development undergone by Judaism in the diaspora has been moved one stage farther back by the most recent Babylonian mythologizing hypothesis as applied to important New Testament ideas and institutions by Bousset, Gunkel and others. According to their view, it is the Judaism of the diaspora itself which requires an explanation, and which, the more it is investigated, the more assumes the character of a syncretistic religion not capable of direct derivation from the religion of the Old Testament. Nay, on this most recent view it would seem as plausible to say that Christianity did receive the elements in question directly from the Oriental systems as that it received them mediately through its descent from Judaism.

In regard to the chronology of the literature involved, it is interesting to compare the views of Friedländer with those of Schürer on the one hand and of Bousset on the other hand. Friedländer puts Aristeas 200 B.C. "at the latest;" Bousset, his pseudo-Aristeas between 40 B.C. and 30 A.D. Similarly Aristobulus is assigned by our author to the early time of 170-150 B.C., by Bousset to the Roman period. The Sapientia Salomonis is dated from the middle of the second century B.C.,

whereas Bousset brings this also down to the time shortly before or after Christ. Baruch is believed to have been written "soon after the destruction of the temple," and 4 Ezra is made dependent on it, to both of which positions Bousset takes exception. Only with reference to the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs Bousset stands for the earlier date in making the *Grundschrift* Maccabean in its time of composition. In most of these points Friedländer adheres to the older views as represented by Schürer, and refuses to accept the newer chronology of the Judaistic literature advocated by Willrich and others.