



Christianity without Christ?

David Friedländer's attempts to establish a religion of reason based on unifying Christianity and Judaism

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ABSTRACT • Ever since the publication of Dohm's *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (On the Civil Improvement of the Jews) in 1781, which argued for Jewish political equality on humanitarian grounds, more and more voices joined those demands. Prominent among them was David Friedländer, a friend and disciple of Moses Mendelssohn. One of the leading figures of the Berlin Haskalah, he worked towards establishing equal legal status for Jews in Prussia. Friedländer did not accept the given view of his times, the antithesis of Jew and German. For him only the antithesis Jew-Christian existed and even that he tried to reconcile by finding common ground in a religion of reason, the groundwork of which he laid out in an Open Letter in 1799. What he proposed at that time may have been illusionary, but it certainly met with approval in enlightened Jewish circles. Friedländer therefore not only stands for those who dared to break with the traditions, but also for the generation of those who consciously aimed at the denationalization of traditional Judaism – and thus decided in favour of the confessionalization and the Germanness of the Jews.

ANYONE WHO HAS DELVED into the beginnings of Jewish integration into German bourgeois society in the late eighteenth century has invariably come across the names of the two leaders of the Enlightenment, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) and David Friedländer (1750–1834). Each in his own way, they both contributed enormously to get the quite controversial process of acculturation and integration of Jews in Prussia and then all over Germany under way.

The attentive historian will soon have noticed that David Friedländer's renown has significantly paled compared to that of his mentor and teacher Moses Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn remains present in the common historical consciousness as a friend of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) and the inspiration for Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*

(Nathan the Wise, 1779), while Friedländer, though highly respected in his day, has become all but forgotten.

This is certainly unfair. David Friedländer was far more than just the epigonal 'disciple' of the 'German Socrates' and the 'Reformer of the German Jews', as Mendelssohn was also called. Friedländer, who was a wealthy silk manufacturer in Berlin, was one of the most talented spokesmen for the Jewish Enlightenment at the end of the eighteenth century and perhaps even more of a 'Reformer of the German Jews' than Mendelssohn.

One thing has become clear in the meantime: those who conduct research on the questions of Jewish emancipation in Prussia will have to turn their attention to David Friedländer more than earlier generations of historians have done. It is now clear that



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David Friedländer, between 1820 and 1864. Print made by Gottfried Küstner. The Trustees of the British Museum.

Friedländer's activities, particularly in the post-Mendelssohn era, were much more important than previously assumed.

The 'zealous propagandist of the Berlin Enlightenment' (Fraenkel 1936: 70), as David Friedländer was once referred to, was not only Mendelssohn's willing helper, but also, perhaps even more so than Mendelssohn himself, influenced the intra-Jewish process of change and integration through a multitude of his own cultural and political activities.

This turn of events could not necessarily have been predicted. Friedländer was not originally a philosopher and intellectual like Mendelssohn. Rather, he was a well-established, successful merchant in Berlin, more practically minded, who was primarily concerned with finding ways and means for Jews in Prussia to achieve the civil rights that they were denied. Along the way, he thought it necessary to introduce Jews to German culture.

To this end, just like his great role model Mendelssohn before him, Friedländer translated parts of the Holy Scripture and Hebrew prayers into German (Elbogen 1936: 92–4). He was convinced that this would serve to 'promote the Enlightenment among the Jews'. The same purpose was served by the establishment of the Jewish Free School in Berlin that Friedländer co-founded in 1778. The school was non-denominational and taught Jewish and Christian children together in the spirit of the Enlightenment.

Friedländer's specific goal was to introduce his fellow Jews to German culture. He was completely convinced that this was the only way for Jews to be accepted into the Prussian state and put on an equal footing with the rest of the population. He was well aware that this forced Jews to face painful choices, demanding a critical confrontation with and a partial departure from what he viewed as outdated Jewish traditions and customs that seemed to be incompatible with the surrounding Christian bourgeois society in the long run.

The Open Letter to Provost Teller

At the end of the eighteenth century, David Friedländer became the driving force on the Jewish side in the efforts to change the existing social and legal conditions. In the years after 1787, those years directly before the Prussian Emancipation Edict of 1812, he was the main protagonist in mobilizing public opinion in a long and gruelling struggle, tirelessly striving to overcome the resistance of the state bureaucracy to equal status for Jews (Freund 1936: 77–9).

His *Sendschreiben an Seine Hochwürden Herrn Oberconsistorialrath und Probst Teller zu Berlin, von einigen Hausvätern jüdischer Religion* (Open Letter to the Reverend Consistory Advisor and Provost Teller in Berlin,

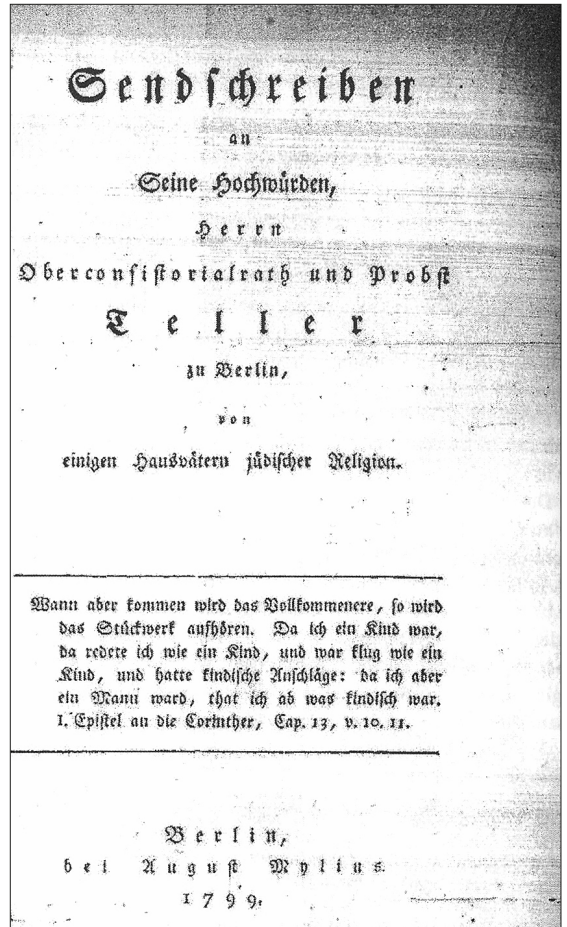
Berlin 1799) should be seen in the context of the ensuing debate. The pamphlet appeared anonymously in Berlin in April 1799 and caused quite a stir in both Christian and Jewish circles. Speculation soon spread that it was not just anyone, but David Friedländer who had written the Open Letter. He initially denied this, less out of concern that he could suffer any negative consequences, but rather thinking that it would be more helpful if his name was not mentioned.

The Letter, addressed to the Berlin Protestant clergyman Friedrich Wilhelm Teller (1734–1804), was obviously intended to draw the public’s attention to the difficulties and oppression Jews in Prussia were faced with and to forcefully promote their recognition as equal and full citizens.

But why was the Open Letter written to a Protestant clergyman? Historians point out that Teller had the reputation of representing liberal Protestantism. This was also the reason that it was assumed that when made aware of the situation of the Jews, he would support their cause.

What made the Open Letter so ‘explosive’? The first few pages described the situation of the Jewish population and their problems, which did not significantly differ from other contemporary reports. For example, there were complaints that the legal and social situation was intolerable in many respects and that improvements were urgently needed.

The stunning, openly expressed consideration that not only ‘Christian religious hate’ was responsible for the miserable situation of the Jewish population, but also the Jews themselves, garnered heightened attention. The Open Letter remarked that they were also prejudiced and had to learn to question and scrutinize themselves and their relationship to society and the public (Friedländer 1799: 17).



Friedländer's Open Letter. Archive Mendelssohn Foundation.

The Open Letter was particularly critical of the Jewish ceremonial laws – things like circumcision (*brit mila*), wearing phylacteries (*tefillin*) and specially knotted ritual fringes (*tzitzit*), attaching a *mezuzah* to the doorpost or various mourning rituals. Friedländer thought that all of these things were no longer in keeping with the times. Such rituals would push the real meaning of the Jewish religion into the background and severely hinder the Jews’ acceptance into Christian German society (Friedländer 1799: 17).

Perhaps even more decisive than the critique of the ceremonial laws was the Letter’s clearly formulated rejection of messianism. Mendelssohn had still fundamentally held on

to messianism and countered the argument that Jews would never be able to be good citizens of the state because of their hope for the Messiah with his conviction that there had never been any thought of a 'forcible return' to Palestine (Mendelssohn 1843: 366).

Mendelssohn's student Friedländer was different. In the Open Letter, he stated that the Jews' 'greatest gain' was that the 'longing for the Messiah and Jerusalem was being more and more removed from their hearts' (Friedländer 1799: 48–9). He argued that this was an essential step to reaching an understanding with the surrounding Christian society.

In the Open Letter, Friedländer professed in his name and in the name of his friends that the Jews – probably referring just to the enlightened Jewry in Berlin – had long taken a certain position between passed-down tradition and the belief in rationality. 'We recognize the basic truths of all religions: the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and that the destiny of humanity is divine bliss.'

Both self-confidently and questioningly, Friedländer said that Moses and Christ based their religions on these principles – that is to say, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and divine bliss as the destiny of humanity. Yet both religions then veered away from their original foundations: Judaism became caught up in ritual formalism and Christianity in mystical dogmatism.

According to Friedländer, the central church dogmas made it difficult for an enlightened Jew to convert to Protestantism. The doctrine of the son of God, the sacrament of baptism and the Lord's Supper were 'historical truths' that would contradict 'rational truths'.

Friedländer did concede that the Jews could make use of a backdoor in that they 'attribute a different meaning to the principles

that contradict rational truths'. They should understand them 'so that all contradictions disappear' (Friedländer 1799: 77). This would not necessarily be a better way than the unconditional conversion to Christianity. However, otherwise, an upstanding Jew could hardly agree to convert without completely losing all self-respect.

From today's perspective, the text invites a whole series of misunderstandings. Yet what Friedländer and his friends were actually proposing was the ideal of a united faith based on a reformed Christianity on the one hand and an enlightened Judaism on the other. Friedländer thought that if the Christians were to give up Christological dogma and the Jews were to make concessions in the ceremonial laws, then nothing would stand in the way of a unified religion and therefore the integration of the Jews as citizens in the Prussian state.

Provost Teller's cautious reply

In May 1799, Teller replied to the offer made in the Open Letter that the Jews would be willing to undergo the formal act of baptism if they would not have to recognize church dogma. His public answer was entitled *Beantwortung des Sendschreibens einiger Hausväter jüdischer Religion an mich den Probst Teller* (Answer to an Open Letter from Some Jewish Heads of Families Addressed to Me, Provost Teller, Berlin 1799). While friendly in tone, it was cool and dismissive in substance.

Provost Teller, who had been a previous conversation partner of Moses Mendelssohn, knew very well that David Friedländer was the author of the Open Letter. One main reason why he even reacted to it was that he, a supposedly enlightened theologian, must have been thrilled that a student of Mendelssohn, representing progressive-minded Jewry, and

a leading member of the Jewish community in Berlin, was eager for a dialogue 'on equal footing'.

However, Friedländer's expectations were probably set too high. Teller's Answer showed that while he had similar thoughts to Friedländer, particularly when it came to dealing with dogma, he was not willing to accept the offer made by Friedländer and other heads of Jewish families that Christians should give up certain traditional teachings and Christian dogma. This proposal went much too far for him, as for most Protestant theologians at the time, and he didn't want to even consider it.

Before he came to the heart of the matter in his reply, Provost Teller assured Friedländer and his friends that he was glad that both Jews and Christians had discovered that rituals 'had been confused with actual religiosity' (Teller 1799: 3) for too long. This was a realization that would be useful to members of both religions. As far as the Jews were concerned, he considered it to be a 'courageous step' that they wanted to 'renounce ... the ceremonial service of the laws of their fathers' (p. 16).

It was clear to Teller that this attitude would be in keeping with the general trends of the times. He thought that the Jews would also be well served not to oppose it. As exemplary role models, he mentioned the names of Moses Mendelssohn, as well as his pupils David Friedländer, Lazarus Bendavid, Isaak Euchel and that of Marcus Herz – in other words, men he felt to have contributed to spreading the Enlightenment within Jewry.

But on closer inspection, although Teller was apparently responding to the arguments set out by Friedländer and his friends, his primary concern was to prove to the Jews and the world that Christianity was the one true and ultimately better religion. Teller did appreciate the monotheistic and ethical

core of Judaism. However, his enlightenment reached its limit when he was confronted with the decision to make concessions regarding the Christian faith.

Provost Teller's further remarks showed that he was in no way willing to make compromises regarding how Christianity was at the time, and perhaps did not even see himself as in the position to do so. He was not at all prepared to question his Christian convictions or his deep-seated Christianity. In essence, he expected from the Jewish side that they ultimately renounce Judaism and its traditions and customs and turn towards Christianity.

If in his reply Teller welcomed the proposals set out by Friedländer and his friends to make a modified profession of Christianity, he remained vague and reserved when it came to the rights of citizenship as set out in the Open Letter. He did not want to comment on this. It was not his place, he replied stiffly, nor that of the church, but that of the state.

In the end, Teller wanted his answer to be seen only as a theological reply, as 'the private opinion of a single Protestant teacher' (Teller 1799: 51). Teller evaded answering the question of whether citizenship rights and freedoms for the Jews should be connected with a modified conversion to Christianity by explaining that this must be decided by another forum. The interests of the state, he continued, were often different from those of religious communities. One had nothing to do with the other.

The battle of words for and against the Jews

Independently of Provost Teller's more or less dismissive reply, the Open Letter sparked a 'loud and fierce dispute' (Dubnow 1920: 191) that kept the public in its thrall for years. The historian Ellen Littmann (1900–75)

counted twenty-three independent writings on this debate alone – mostly pamphlets, but also ten essays and a series of more or less detailed discussions in various magazines and newspapers (Littmann 1936: 105).

So who threw themselves into this debate? According to Littmann, they were always philologists or Protestant theologians, who could be divided into three categories: the rationalists, the believers in the Revelation and the romantics. There is no reason not to accept the division into these categories. While it does not allow an exact classification of the writings and discussions, it is certainly suitable as a means to characterize certain attitudes and schools of thought in the debate about the Open Letter.

In this categorization, the rationalists (those authors who are critical of the Book of Revelation, but do not reject the Christian religion) are those who argue in favour of accepting ‘only what would be able to stand up before the judgement of reason’ (Littmann 1936: 107). Though the rationalists may doubt that Christ is the son of God, they are united in their conviction that Christ is the founder of a ‘better’ religion and that the Jews would do well to abandon their ceremonial laws and convert to Christianity.

A typical example of a rationalist was Gottlob Benjamin Gerlach (1770–1844), who wrote *Moses und Christus: Oder über den innern Werth und die wahrscheinlichen Folgen des Sendschreibens einiger Hausväter jüdischer Religion an Herrn Probst Teller und dessen darauf erteilte Antwort* (Moses and Christ, Berlin 1799). He was presumably a Protestant clergyman, not to be confused with the pedagogue of the same name who had lived a century earlier. For him, the Open Letter from Friedländer and his friends was simply one more piece of evidence that ‘external religiosity’ was in the process of disappearing. He thought this was true for both

Jews and Christians alike. He used the memorable image of a ‘dilapidated house’ in which ‘the Christian lived on the top and the son of Israel on the bottom floor’ (Gerlach 1799: 5).

According to his pamphlet, the dilapidated state of the house forced the latter, the son of Israel, to take lodgings with the former. However, this was dangerous, as the top part of the house was threatening to collapse, despite all of the repair work done to it. The best thing would be for both sides to move out, and to do so together, ‘to take each other by the hand as human beings and worship the great constructor of the world together as God’s children’ (Gerlach 1799: 6).

The reader will find surprisingly enlightened passages about civil rights and freedoms for Jews in Gerlach’s *Moses and Christ*. When asked, for example, the reasons for the ‘moral ruin of this nation’ as claimed at the time, he answered that the blame for this lay solely and squarely with the Christians, who had prevented the equality of the Jews.

Gerlach regretted that those responsible did not judge this matter according to the principles of natural law and human rights, but primarily according to the interests of the state. He stated if the state ‘recognizes the right of the son of Israel to be and be considered a human being ..., it should not deny him the right of citizenship in my opinion’ (Gerlach 1799: 15).

Those Littmann refers to as believers in the Revelation or dogmatics argue the opposite. For example, the philosophy professor Jean André de Luc of Göttingen complained in his publication *An die Hausväter jüdischer Religion, Verfasser eines an den Herrn Ober-Consistorialrath und Probst Teller zu Berlin gerichteten Sendschreibens* (To the Heads of Families in the Jewish Religion, Berlin 1799) that the followers of the Enlightenment wanted to reduce Christianity to its rational content. According to de Luc, if this were

to be the case, then there would be no real reason to deny the Jews the rights they demanded.

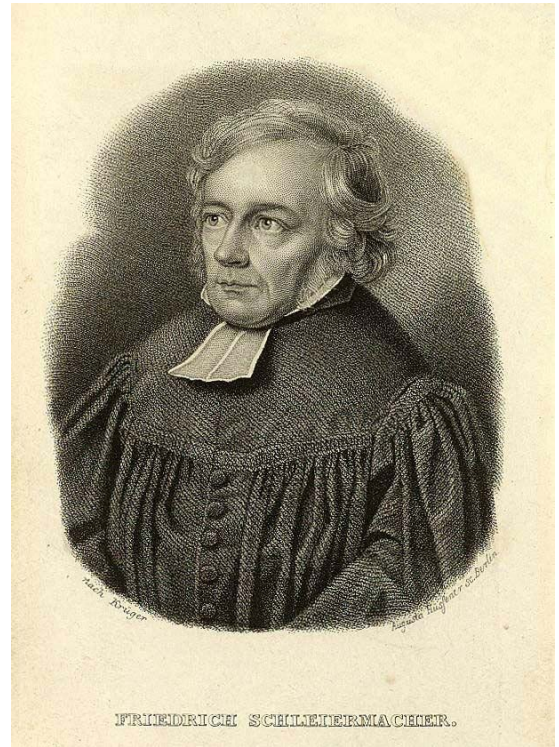
The reservations of the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher

Of the large number of pamphlets published in response to the Open Letter, *Briefe bei Gelegenheit der politisch theologischen Aufgabe und des Sendschreibens jüdischer Hausväter: Von einem Prediger außerhalb Berlin* (Letters from a Preacher outside Berlin, Berlin 1799) deserve special attention. Their author is none other than the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), characterized by Littman as a romantic, who at the time was the chaplain to the Charité hospital and, in addition to the Schlegel brothers, also had contact with Henriette and Marcus Herz.

It is said that Schleiermacher was prompted to comment on the Open Letter by Marcus Herz, the favourite student of Immanuel Kant. There was no question for him that the only purpose of the Open Letter was to improve the social situation and standing of the Jews in Prussia. Schleiermacher rejected a conditional conversion of Jews to Christianity because he was convinced that Jews displayed ‘no disposition to Christianity’.

In addition, were unbelievers to enter Christian society, the church would face the danger of becoming infected with an undesirable ‘Judaized Christianity’. Schleiermacher prophesied that a ‘Judaized Christianity would be a real disease that we should immunize ourselves against’ (Schleiermacher 1799: 46). The chaplain and philosopher went on to openly deride the earnest efforts of enlightened Jewish circles to propagate a quasi ‘Christianity without Christ’.

Consequently, Schleiermacher reacted extremely guardedly to the Open Letter’s



Friedrich Schleiermacher in the German annual handbook 1838 by Karl Büchner, Berlin.

concrete suggestion that Jews would renounce certain rituals if they were granted citizenship rights in return. He saw no real advantage in the sacrifice offered and rather argued that Jews should retain their traditional ceremonial laws. Only when these conflicted with the laws of the state should they be subjugated to them, according to Schleiermacher.

It was probably only the insinuated suspicion that the Jews were using the Open Letter as a pragmatic pretext for rapid civic equality that moved Schleiermacher to take a public stance. In his scholarly diary, he noted that he was downright hurt by the ‘uproar’, the Open Letter, the ‘behaviour of Enlightenment theology’ and the ‘indifference of the state’ (Dilthey 1870: 111).

It remains a matter of dispute to what extent anti-Jewish sentiments played a role

in Schleiermacher's remarks. From today's perspective, some of his statements suggest that he, like many of his contemporaries, had a more or less ambivalent attitude towards Judaism. The only question is whether with him we are dealing with an outdated theological anti-Judaism or already with an early form of modern antisemitism. On the other hand, it may be that Schleiermacher's reaction was even more typical of the Protestantism of that time than Teller's reaction.

Curiosities of the Open Letter debate

Among the twenty-three replies documented by Littmann, there are also texts that should be relegated to the realm of fantasy, which, however, shows how much David Friedländer's Open Letter moved people.

In one reply, entitled *Gespräch über das Sendschreiben von einigen jüdischen Hausvätern an den Probst Teller, zwischen einem christlichen Theologen und einem alten Juden* (Conversation about the Open Letter from some Heads of Jewish Families to Provost Teller between a Christian Theologian and an Old Jew, Berlin 1799), the anonymous writer has Baruch say that among 'all of the family heads of our colony', among their sons, daughters and sons-in-law, there is hardly anyone who does not agree with Friedländer's views (Anonymous 1799: 14).

Baruch, the old Jew as he is called, sees no way out of the dilemma other than to follow Friedländer's proposals. He expects the Open Letter to achieve a twofold success: firstly, the Orthodox would experience something of the thought processes of their enlightened brothers and secondly, the enlightened would be able to follow the path to separate the core from the shell of their religion.

Another voice is downright strange, namely that of the author of the novel *Charlotte Sampson, oder Geschichte eines jüdischen*

Hausvaters, der mit seiner Familie dem Glauben seiner Väter entsagte: Eine Geschichte der neuesten Zeit (Charlotte Sampson, or the Story of Jewish Family Father who Forsook the Faith of his Fathers, Berlin 1809). It was initially disputed whether the author was a Christian or a Jew.

Today we know that the author was not a Jew, but rather the philosopher, theologian and author Georg Heinrich Henrici (1770–1851) of Goslar. He centred the convoluted plot of the novel around the love of the Jewish girl Charlotte Sampson for Julius Hernau, the Christian neighbour's son she is secretly engaged to.

Charlotte hopes to be able to wed her beloved, believing that the Open Letter to Provost Teller will allow them to enter into marriage. However, as Teller rejects a union of faith without a real baptism, Charlotte and her beloved see their hopes dashed for a shared future. This is a great tragedy for the lovers, because now father Sampson says he cannot give his consent to the marriage and no longer wants to.

The couple run away and, after wandering aimlessly for a long time, finally reach a minister of a small village near Berlin, who secretly gives the father news about where his daughter is. Father Sampson immediately sets off to the village, accompanied by his wife, his friend Rabbi Markus and his daughter. There they have an in-depth discussion about religion with the minister, who has the suggestive name of Wartenfels (i.e. 'patient bedrock').

Their discussion quoted passages from the Open Letter and Teller's reply verbatim. In the end, Sampson is convinced of the truth of an enlightened Christianity to the extent that he is willing to be baptized, although on the condition that he does not have to submit to Christological dogma (Henrici 1840: 183).

Only Sampson's friend, the rabbi who

came along, and his daughter need a bit longer to think about taking this step as well. The novel ends with the baptism of both families and the weddings of both Sampson's daughter and Julius Hernau, and that of the minister and the rabbi's daughter. All's well that ends well.

The Open Letter debate in Jewish historiography

As is to be expected, the Open Letter was strongly criticized in Jewish historiography. The historian Heinrich Graetz (1817–91) was particularly harsh in his criticism, especially of the Letter's author, David Friedländer. In his *Geschichte der Juden* (History of the Jews, Leipzig 1870), he calls Friedländer a 'blockhead', with a 'philistine, limited nature' who only repeats the thoughts of others and parrots clichés.

According to Graetz, the world was reflected upside down in Friedländer's mind. In his monumental misconstruing of reality, he thought that because some free-thinking Christians scoffed at the existence of God, they had completely foresworn Jesus and Christianity altogether. Graetz remarked that if the whole affair weren't so embarrassing, we could consider the Open Letter a 'satire of uncharitable Christianity' (Graetz 1870: 173).

Even though other Jewish contemporaries expressed themselves more diplomatically and forgivingly than Graetz, the general tenor of their assessments was negative. Especially the leading Jewish historians who commented on Friedländer's suggestion that Jews convert to Christianity were generally dismissive in their responses. And nothing about that has changed up to this day.

The arguments made against Friedländer's proposal have by and large remained the same. On the one hand, the 'lack of dignity' of the

whole process has been pointed out. On the other, various accusations have been made, including that the whole undertaking was 'bizarre' (Isaak Markus Jost; Jost 1859: 319), that the Open Letter was a 'historical misstep' (Fritz Friedländer; Friedländer 1934), up to the comment by Hans-Joachim Schoeps that the 'religious obliviousness' (Schoeps 1935: 41) in Judaism had never gone as far as it did in Friedländer's Letter. Strong stuff in every case.

Let's take a more objective view from today's perspective. We can certainly accuse David Friedländer of betraying Judaism and express contempt for the fact that in doing so, he contributed to ushering in the process that would have seen Jewish tradition and rituals being abandoned in exchange for the granting of emancipation. However, with their offer of a conditional conversion to Christianity, he and his friends signalled to the world that Jews, in accordance with the Halakhic principle of *dina d'malkhuta dina* ('the law of the government is the law'), wanted to see themselves as citizens and as part of the Prussian nation.

Of course, the option considered here went far beyond the positions held by Friedländer's mentor and role model Moses Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn had still wanted to generate understanding for Jewish ceremonial laws. In his *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (Jerusalem: On Religious Power and Judaism) published in 1783, he stated that no deviations from the revelations of the laws were possible: 'If civil union [i.e. emancipation; J. H. Sch.] cannot be obtained by any other means than by deviating from the laws ... then we must necessarily renounce civil union' (Mendelssohn 1843: 357–8).

If Moses Mendelssohn fundamentally still wanted to hold on to the belief in the Messiah of the fathers, Friedländer, as mentioned before, called it the 'greatest gain' for

the Jews if they were to give up on messianism (Friedländer 1799: 48–9). In this context, Friedländer advocated a far-reaching denationalization of Jewry. This meant, in essence, that he rejected a return of the Jews to the Holy Land and advocated Jewish integration into the surrounding Christian society instead.

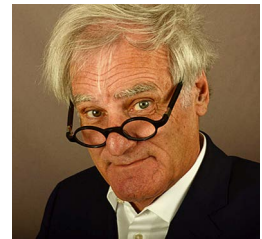
From this last idea we can deduce that what David Friedländer had in mind was a model of a religion where the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity would be more or less blurred. From his point of view, it didn't matter how a person saw themselves or defined themselves. The only important thing according to Friedländer was that their belief in God be directed by and based on reason. This belief can be professed by anyone as they like – regardless of whether they are a Christian, a Jew or a Muslim.

Friedländer did not want to cling to tradition at any price. Rather, he was one of those thinkers of the Jewish Enlightenment who, at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, advocated for a root-and-branch reform of Judaism. Let me conclude with the observation that in this way, Friedländer did much to clear the way mentally for the Jewish population and the surrounding Christian-influenced society to come together in Prussia.

The case set out here made for a rapprochement between Jews and the Christian surrounding society deserves, I think, special attention in retrospect. Even if David Friedländer, as some of his critics say, ended up creating a dead end with his appeal for a confessionalization of Judaism and a rapprochement with the surrounding society, we should not condemn him entirely. His efforts to establish a religion of reason have secured him a place in the annals of the history of German–Jewish relations, and this should not be underestimated. Friedländer did not

consider himself an intellectual or visionary, but in practical terms of Jewish education, he followed exactly in the footsteps of Moses Mendelssohn. Regarding the 'Jewish question' in Prussia/Germany, Friedländer was more radical than his spiritual master, and also in terms of giving up old traditional habits. Some of his ideas probably exceeded the limits of feasible reforms in Judaism at that time, and this might have been one of the reasons why later Jewish historiography paid less attention to him than to some of his fellow campaigners. ■

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