

IN MEMORY OF FREUDENTHAL

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THE centenary of the birth of Freudenthal should not be allowed to pass in silence, if only because of his great services to the cause of Spinoza study. He was one of the leading pioneers in exact Spinoza research, and his contributions constitute a turning-point in this important and attractive field of investigation.

Jacob Freudenthal was born on June 20, 1839, at Bodenfelde, a village in the province of Hanover. His people were poor, and his early schooling was carried on amid considerable difficulties. At the age of 12 he entered his father's shop, but showed so little interest in it that it was thought best to send him to a school in Hanover with the idea of his becoming a schoolmaster eventually. In 1856 he entered the Jewish Seminary in Breslau, where he continued his studies until 1862. In Breslau he worked under several distinguished Jewish teachers (Frankel, Bernays, and others), and laid the foundations of his sound Hebrew and Classical learning. In 1862 he went to the University of Göttingen, where he studied philosophy under Lotze. His Ph.D. dissertation dealt with some aspects of Aristotle's philosophy. In the course of the 1860's Freudenthal also published some essays on the Greek and Hebrew conceptions of God, and on Alexandrian Religious Philosophy; and he carried on some investigations in medieval philosophy.

When, in 1866, Bernays was appointed Hon. Professor and Director of the Library in the University of Bonn, Freudenthal succeeded him in the Breslau Seminary. Nine years later he added the post of lecturer at the Breslau University, where he was promoted to the rank of Honorary Professor in 1879. It was extremely difficult at that time for a professing Jew to be elected to an ordinary salaried Chair at a German University. The University of Breslau nominated him for the ordinary Chair in Philosophy in 1888, but it took them two years to persuade the imperial headquarters to sanction the appointment. Accordingly, in 1890, Freudenthal resigned his post at the Breslau Seminary, and entered on his distinguished career as University Professor.

Freudenthal's interest in Spinoza was probably first roused by his teacher Bernays, who, in 1850, published an essay on Spinoza's *Hebrew Grammar*. His own first contribution to Spinoza literature appeared in 1887, in the form of a long paper on "Spinoza and Scholasticism," in a volume of essays published in honour of Zeller. In 1895 his essay on "The History of Spinozism" was published in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (vol. viii). About that time, with the encouragement of the Berlin Academy, Freudenthal undertook a laborious survey of all the original sources of information relating to the life and work of Spinoza. In the course of it, he searched many libraries and archives in Holland and England as well as elsewhere. The results were published in his epoch-making work, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinozas in Quellenschriften und Nichtamtlichen Nachrichten*, Leipzig, 1899. This source-book contains nearly all the available material, carefully collected, and duly annotated. Two Dutch scholars, Meinsma and Meyer, had already done some valuable work in this field, but Freudenthal's book is still the only comprehensive collection of documents for an authentic account of the life and work of Spinoza. Earlier biographers were far too slipshod in their methods and quite unreliable in their

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results. Five years later Freudenthal produced a *Life of Spinoza*, which is still the best book on the subject. The *Life* was to have been followed by a companion volume on the *Teaching of Spinoza*. Unfortunately he died, in 1907, before completing it. But he left considerable portions of it in manuscript. These were edited by the late Dr. Gebhardt, and published, together with a new edition of the *Life*, in 1927, under the original title of *Spinoza, Leben und Lehre (Bibliotheca Spinozana)*. This is a bulky volume of about 620 quarto pages. Bigger volumes on Spinoza have appeared since then, but nothing more important or as important, in spite of its incompleteness.

The secret of Freudenthal's success as a biographer of Spinoza may be indicated in a few words. Two requisites are essential for a good biographer—knowledge and sympathy. Knowledge may be acquired by anybody with sufficient intelligence and industry. Sympathy, however, is of a different order. It depends on one's entire life and character. And Freudenthal, as a Spinoza biographer, had the supreme qualification of having lived a life very like that of his subject. Both were brought up at first in a conservative Jewish home; both were eager students of Hebrew, Classical, and Modern Knowledge; both felt it incumbent on them to attempt a conciliation between East and West, between the old and the new, between the religious and the secular outlook; and both suffered in various ways for being what they were. To have lived and suffered in the same kind of way as Spinoza did, is not an enviable gift; but it is literally the *sympathy* that is one of the best qualifications of a great Spinoza biographer.

Freudenthal was fully qualified in this respect as well as by his wide knowledge and critical powers; and his name will be remembered and honoured by those who are genuinely interested in the life and thought of one of the deepest thinkers and greatest characters of all times.