



Philo-Judaeus of Alexandria

Norman Bentwich

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"In his study of Philo Mr. Bentwich has done good service by demonstrating this characteristically Jewish combination of qualities in the spirit of the great Alexandrine, and by vindicating the claim of Philo to rank among the great teachers of Judaism." -The Jewish Review

"Philo, the chief light of Hellenistic Judaism, by a strange fate was rejected and forgotten by his own people, while he was taken up by the Christians and almost adopted as one of their own. This difference of attitude towards him on the part of Jews and Christians is easily explained. Philo was alien in spirit to the narrow rabbinical Judaism which became universal among the Jews in the second century after Christ, and hence was suspected as unorthodox and put under the ban. On the other hand, his philosophy and exegetical method appealed to the early Fathers, especially those of the Alexandrian school, and even much of his religious teaching was more in sympathy with Christian than with later Jewish thought. In modern times, however, Jewish sentiment towards this illustrious coreligionist has undergone considerable change. In the volume before us Mr. Norman Bentwich has undertaken to make him better known among his own people, and to remove any prejudice that might still exist against him by showing that, after all, he was a true Jew. Though the work is written for Jews, and, as the author frankly tells us, from a Jewish standpoint, by reason of its subject it is likely to attract also some Gentile readers." -America

"Having specialized in Jewish history and literature, Mr. Bentwich was eminently fitted to undertake the work on Hellenism. It is this movement in Judaism which Mr. Bentwich has set himself to describe. During the last two or three centuries before the common era the Jewish people came in close contact with the Greek-speaking world, and naturally, could not entirely escape its influence. Greek thought prevailed throughout the Eastern world, and Hellenism, or the culture of Greece, for which Hellas is the older name, dominated the intellectual activity of men. Although the Jews were always opposed to foreign influences which conflicted with their mode of thinking, the Greek culture nevertheless penetrated Jewish life in one way or another....The struggle of Judaism with Hellenistic culture marks one of the most fundamental conflicts in the march of civilization, and as a result, Hellenistic Judaism is one of the most remarkable contributions to Jewish genius to the world's thought....The author treats this subject from the Jewish point of view. Others are chiefly interested in the relation of Hellenism to Christianity. The school of writers contrast the broad universalism of Hellenistic Judaism with the supposed narrow legalism of the Pharisees which eventually prevailed in Palestine. Mr. Bentwich combats this attitude. The present volume is popular in character and the author has not refrained from pointing out parallels in modern Jewish life....Mr. Bentwich apart from giving historical descriptions of the various phases of Hellenism in Palestine and in the Diaspora, fully describes the literature produced by the Jews during that period. He graphically and minutely describes the life and works of Philo, Josephus and other important Jewish writers. He gives a fine resume of the wisdom of Ben Sira and also, deals with the influence of the Septuagint and the attitude of the Jewish Rabbis toward it. The book will appeal to the cultured layman who wishes to be informed on the various movements of Judaism." -The Advocate: America's Jewish Journal

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