

### Jerusalem, Friedrich Wilhelm

Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem (1709–1789) was a theologian and the royal tutor in Braunschweig, the director of the *Collegium Carolinum*, the court preacher in Wolfenbüttel, the abbot of Marienthal (1749–1752) and Riddagshausen (Brunswick Theological Seminary, 1752).

Jerusalem is known for his vacillation – an indecisive attitude typical of the so-called “Neologians.” The Neologians’ indecision was demonstrated by, on the one hand, advocating for abolishing or re-shaping conventional Christian teaching content, and on the other hand, continued adherence to it. In his most important work *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion* (3 vols., 1768, 1772, 1779; Observations about the predominant truths of religion) Jerusalem deals with Spinozistic, church-critical, and unionist (trans-confessional) movements employing an apologetic approach.

As regards Jerusalem’s apologetic he (1) follows the philosophical rationalism of the Leibniz-Wolff school and asserts the morally superior value of a Christian political system. Due to this assertion of a Christian political system he (2) advocates a radical moral re-shaping of Christian confessional content: Christ is not a God-man, but just an envoy from God with a mission of making human discipleship and who merely bears a rational knowledge of God. Jerusalem omits traditional dogmatic doctrines of God, Christ, and salvation, e.g., satisfaction, imputation, original sin, and the Trinity. What becomes a central concern for Jerusalem is his teaching about

the immortality of human souls, who Jerusalem believes are solely responsible for their own post-mortual state. Jerusalem maintains the conventional doctrine of a double outcome of the Last Judgment (just's salvation or sinner's damnation) but considers also the simultaneous possibility of an *apokatastasis panton*. Jerusalem views the history of religion as God working through history pedagogically. He sees the history of religion as developing in three stages, from primeval natural revelation via "Mosaic religion" up to Christ. (3) However, in seemingly direct contrast to what Jerusalem advocates in his most important academic works, he elsewhere adheres to the doctrine of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and satisfaction. This occurs particularly in his sermons. He also affirms the personal inspiration of biblical authors and that Moses received a direct revelation from God. On the other hand he was among the first to advocate the documentary hypothesis for the formation of the Pentateuch.

Overall, Jerusalem's hermeneutic is ethically oriented. Using the theory of accommodation, Jerusalem distinguished the historical basis of biblical statements from their content made accessible through reason. The Bible, for him, was a book of moral teachings and hence, Jerusalem preferred allegorical to literal interpretations of the Bible and aimed to bring to the fore its moral content accessible by way of reason.

**Bibliography:** ■ Müller, W. E., *Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem* (Berlin 1984). ■ Müller, W. E., "Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem," in *Profile des neuzeitlichen Protestantismus*, vol. 1 (ed. F. W. Graf; Gütersloh 1990) 55–70.

*Friedemann Stengel*