

Old Testament Theology  
Dr. Hermann Schultz (translated by Rev. J.A. Patterson, M.A.)  
*The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5:132-133. [1894]

In his Preface the translator introduces this work to the English-speaking public with the remark that Schultz is thought by many to have “succeeded in discovering the *via media* between the positions of Biblical scholars like Delitzsch on the one hand and Stade on the other.” This statement may be applicable to the first edition of the original, which appeared in 1869; but we do not see on what grounds it is made to apply to the later forms which the work has assumed from the second edition onward, or to the form in which the translation now offers it. Already in the second edition, Schultz had become a convert to the Grafian view of the late origin of the so-called priestly sections of the Pentateuch; whereas, before, his critical views had closely resembled Ewald’s, with a leaning here and there to greater conservatism. As far, therefore, as principles of historical criticism are concerned, this Old Testament Theology does not follow a *via media* at all, but belongs to the advanced school. With equal right one might assign an intermediate position to Kuenen, because he does not go the length of Stade and Vernes. There is a difference of course in this respect, that Kuenen is more consistent than Schultz in applying the principles of his criticism. To Kuenen the phenomena of the Old Testament, being viewed from the standpoint of evolution, appear in a constant flux; and thus, all unity of doctrine being precluded, there is no longer any place for Old Testament theology. Schultz on the other hand maintains that there is a certain unity. A careful reader will soon observe, however, that this unity is not scientifically evolved from the facts, but rather imposed upon them from an external source. It is the dualism between a naturalistic treatment and a quasi-supernaturalistic appreciation of Biblical phenomena, that meets us here at every step. The development of Israel’s religion is throughout discussed with the utmost freedom, as something human and subjective; and on reading the discussion, we would not ascribe to the author any other than the naturalistic view. But all at once, and apparently unconnected with these premises, the idea of revelation is introduced. It is obvious that revelation, so conceived of, must be a process forever inaccessible to inference or proof. The apparent conservatism of Schultz’s work, therefore, is something accessory, not being due to what he obtains from a careful review of the facts in accordance with his own critical canons, but largely to certain philosophical ideas imported from without. And it is certainly not unfair to ask on which side the influence of a work will lie, in which two such discordant elements are combined. Neo-Kantianism is sure to pass by as one of the many phases of speculation. But those who do not care for any philosophic hypothesis, and simply ask for historical facts and conclusions (and there will be many of this class among English and American readers), are sure, on taking this book as a guide, to frame a less conservative view of the Old Testament than Prof. Paterson is crediting Schultz with.

While unable to form another estimate of the tendency of the book as whole, we are not blind to its many excellent qualities in other respects. The author possesses in a high degree the faculty of clear representation and effective grouping. A wealth of material is collected and presented here, which fully deserves consideration. There is a wholesome warning on some points against the excesses of the most advanced criticism. The translation also is excellent, and the division of the original into two volumes agrees with the twofold character of the contents.

In the first edition Schultz had divided the material into the three periods of Mosaism, Prophetism

and Levitism. Later, when changing his views in the direction above indicated, he also had to abandon the separate treatment of the Mosaic period. The Levitical period (450-140 B.C.) having been treated from the outset as an appendix, the main body of the book was now concerned with the Mosaic-prophetic religion, without further distinction as to periods. This, while avoiding many repetitions, obscured to a great extent the historical development of the religious ideas. To supply this deficiency, the author now first gives a historical sketch of the development of religion and morals in Israel down to the founding of the Asmonæan state. This, together with the Introduction, fills the first volume. With other histories of the religion of Israel of the same type, it shares the defect of substituting for the plastic, living personalities of the Bible mere shadowy and elusive figures. All this is owing, of course, to the critical estimate of the sources. Everything relating to the pre-Mosaic period is of either a mythical or a legendary character. Even for the post-Mosaic times traces of legend are to be detected. Consequently a character like that of Moses, for instance, is drawn with lines so indistinct that one begins to ask in despair, whether from the modern premises any history of Israel's religion prior to the prophetic times is possible. The second volume is much more satisfactory from the point of view of definiteness. It treats successively of "The Consciousness of Salvation," "The Religious View of the World," and "The Hope of the Prophetic Period." The idea of the Covenant is justly restored to its position of importance as the central idea of the consciousness of salvation.

We end by saying that we wish to be classified with those readers of whom the author says in the Preface to the first German edition, that they can utilize his material only after having once more thrown it into its former confusion.