

Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, edited by Claus Westermann. Eng. trans. ed. by James Luther Mays (John Knox Press: Richmond, Va.) Originally pub. as Probleme alttestamentlicher Hermeneutik by Chr. Kaiser Verlag, München, 1960. First English edition 1963.

"Remarks on the Theses of Bultmann and Baumgartel" by Claus Westermann. Translated by Dietrich Ritschl. p. 123-133

p. 123 The Introduction by D. C. Simpson to the collection The Psalmists (London, 1926) provides a typical example of the attempt to read into the Old Testament a pre-conceived notion of history which has been lifted from an alien context. The significant passage is this:

p.124 The Higher Criticism, once feared as the enemy of Revelation, has long since proved itself the ally alike of faith and of reason. It has led Old Testament theologians to formulate a theory of the gradual growth of the Hebrew Religion from lowly origins at Sinai into the strong and vigorous system of the post-exilic Judaism which forms the background of the Christian Gospels. This theory is now generally accepted in its broad outlines, however much individual scholars may differ in regard to details. So far from leading to a denial of the truth of the Divine self-revelation vouchsafed to the Hebrew people in preparation for the Incarnation, it provides a reasonable conception of the Hebrews' slowly increasing consciousness of that preparatory revelation. It shows conclusively that to Moses there was apparent at the most only a faint glimmer of the light of God's self-revelation, a light which shone more clearly for the eighth century prophets, was reflected in the Deuteronomic Law Book of Josiah's reign, and illuminated with even more intense splendour the thought of the exilic prophets, throwing into bold relief the lights and shadows of Jewish life, and revealing the ever-increasing consciousness of the barrier of sin and also the ramifications of Jewish legalism as the result of its attempts to thrust this barrier aside. Still later some Jewish seekers after a fuller revelation of God found help in what they called 'Wisdom' as the medium between God and man, while others, the Apocalyptists, endeavoured to pierce the veil and visualize a more or less spiritual Kingdom. The end of such a process of development, and the climax of the whole, was the advent of the Perfect Mediator and his establishment of the Christian Church (pp. vi f.)

This all too smooth line of a steady development of the Israelite religion from primitive beginnings under Moses to a climax in the origin of Christianity, which was thought to be generally accepted (rightly so?) by Old Testament scholars in 1926, is hardly acknowledged by a single scholar in the field of Old Testament today. It is significant that this approach was related to a certain method, namely, "the higher criticism," or the historical-critical method. But obviously a seemingly critical approach is here tied so intimately to a specific dogma of historical development that everything is actually determined by this dogma; the arrangement and also the evaluation of events are absolutely fixed.

D. M. G. Stalker, "Exodus", Peake's Commentary, p. 227

Rowley has argued convincingly against the priority of the so-called Ritual Decalogue in ((Exod)) 34.10-26, which, on the former evolutionary view of OT religion, // was held to be earlier than Exod. 20 and Dt. 5, and possibly Mosaic, as the others were not.