

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

ART. VI.—EWALD'S "OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY."

*Old and New Testament Theology.* By HEINRICH EWALD. Translated from the German by the Rev. T. GOADBY, B.A. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1888; pp. viii., 458.

THIS is one of the newest volumes of the valuable Foreign Theological Library, being the first issue for 1888. It is a companion volume to "Revelation: its Nature and Record," by the same author and translator. The volumes are selections from Ewald's *Die Lehre der Bibel von Gott, oder Theologie des Alten und Neuen Bundes*, which was published, 1870-75, in four volumes, of which the last was still in the press when the writer died. The translator promises us an analysis of the whole work; but meanwhile he offers to English readers these selections from what was the last and ripest, though not the greatest, work of Ewald's most laborious and productive life. The translator is probably wise in not venturing to give the whole of it to the English public. Even Germans have found the diffusiveness of Ewald's final review of Biblical religion, with its digressions upon the political and ecclesiastical questions of the day, somewhat trying. To those who have less patience and less interest in the questions discussed, it would no doubt be still more so: and the selections given are sufficient to give the reader a comprehensive knowledge of the main ideas of the work. They are set forth with Ewald's characteristic ability, confidence, earnestness, and love of truth.

To a certain extent the present volume covers the same ground as a work which appeared almost simultaneously with it, Canon Mason's "The Faith of the Gospel," (Rivingtons, 1888); but Canon Mason's treatise is much more compact, and his handling of the various topics which are common to the two works is naturally very different from that of the Göttingen professor.

The main subjects treated of in "Old and New Testament Theology" are: the Divine Nature and Man's Knowledge of it; Creation; Order and Progress; Faith; the Trinity; the Doctrine of Immortality.

When Ewald was in Oxford some forty or more years ago, one of the many persons who were invited to meet him asked him whether he thought that St. John wrote the Fourth Gospel. "I know that he wrote it," was the answer, delivered with the air of one who had conversed with the Apostle on the subject. This dogmatism is bracing and cheering when it exists in those who have full knowledge respecting subjects in which certitude is possible. Few men of real genius and learning have had more confidence in their own opinions than

Ewald; and he sometimes exhibited it in spheres in which no one has the right to dogmatize. Thus, he is quite certain that angels are not created beings, and have no variability of character. Bad angels are angels who execute Divine punishment on man (pp. 67, 80).

But this positivism is not always accompanied by clearness. At times, what is given with one hand seems to be taken away with the other, or else thoughts are obscured rather than expressed by amplitude of language. Take, for instance, his remarks upon a belief in miracles: "There are scholars so infatuated and so blind to the wonders of the Bible that they wholly refuse to admit their reality, and would extirpate the word 'miracle' from all ancient and modern tongues. But the Divine order of the world and its progress, to which all Biblical wonders point, is itself the supreme and *only true wonder* for men. Every instance of it, however small, is a wonder; how much more the whole sweep of it!" (P. 220.) But if the order of the universe is the "only true wonder," and if every detail of it is a wonder, where is there any room for miracle? To say that everything is miraculous is much the same as saying that nothing is: in either case "miracle," in the ordinary sense of the term, is denied.

Most readers will find what Canon Mason says respecting the angels more in harmony with their own view of what Scripture teaches on the subject. After quoting Job xxxviii. 4-7 (the beautiful passage about "the sons of God shouting for joy" at the Creation), Canon Mason continues: "It is precarious, of course, to press the language of such a poetical apostrophe for purposes of doctrine; but what we learn elsewhere of the relation of angels to the world makes it seem natural that the purely spiritual creatures should be the first to come into being. . . . We may consider them as a kind of spiritual substratum, in which the material things are planted. They form a preparatory creation, to receive what is to follow. It is, perhaps, for this reason that, in the vision of Jacob, and our Lord's interpretation of it, the angels are seen ascending first, and descending after: their natural place is in the world below" (St. John i. 51). And then after mentioning speculations as to the share which angels may have had in developing the material universe out of chaos, and may still have in the regulation of it, he wisely concludes with the remark: "Definite knowledge upon this point has not, however, been given to us" (pp. 67-69).

With regard to miracles, it is less easy to compare the two teachers, for Canon Mason says very little on the subject. He contends for the miraculous mode of Christ's birth; and even goes so far as to say that "for the true Incarnation no other

entrance into the world is imaginable but that which was chosen" (p. 114): and also for the reality of Christ's resurrection as a return from the dead, with a body that could be seen and handled, "into a living relation with material and palpable things" (p. 198). But of the nature of miracles in themselves and in their relation to what Ewald calls "the Divine order of the world and its progress," there is little or no discussion. The translation of Ewald's work, however, has an index, whereas Canon Mason's book has none; so that in looking for notices of any particular subject it is easier to find them in the one volume than in the other.

Of this "Divine order" Ewald says finely in another place: "No doubt there is much of detail in the sum of things in the world and the Divine order that man is little able to understand, and cannot at all conceive how it can be of God. The dark questions by which Job was overwhelmed, as his poet represents him, might be repeated to-day. In reality, however, all this is only as a summons to man to pursue his inquiry from point to point, and ascertain with growing certainty how far everything is of God—a course of action the Bible does not forbid, but rather demands. . . . But how certainly everything is of God all human action confirms in a sense doubly strong. For if free will moves and works in man as if he were God, and may, indeed, embolden itself to contravene God's will, yet this is so only because God has given to the will such power, at the same time prescribing its limit. If, then, the whole life and conduct of the unrighteous has its possibility only through God, it must serve in the course and issue of things to advance the ultimate aim of the Divine order, and so prove in the long run only an instrument in the hand of God for good" (pp. 197, 198). There are also some fine passages towards the end of the volume respecting the world to come; but, on the whole, it is not a book that carries the reader on from page to page with the desire to have more.

It is by his contributions to Hebrew philology, and by his "History of Israel," that Ewald's fame will live. This last work of his will not add much to it.

ALFRED PLUMMER.

