

Historisch-Critisch Onderzoek naar het Ontstaan en de Verzameling van de Boeken des Ouden Verbonds: De Profetische Boeken des Ouden Verbonds
A. Kuenen

The Presbyterian and Reformed Review 2:139-140. [1891]

The difference between the new edition of this second volume of Kuenen's work and the first edition which appeared in 1863 is by no means as great as that between the corresponding issues of the first volume. In the realm of Pentateuchal criticism revolutions have taken place, while the modern theories in regard to the prophetic writings exhibit a steadier and more gradual development. The fact, moreover, that Kuenen is one of the recognized leaders among the advocates of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis, lends a special interest to the first volume, which, from the nature of the case, cannot be claimed for his treatment of the present matter. Both volumes resemble each other in this respect that they take account of the most recent discussions and enable the reader by careful study to familiarize himself with the present status and the general trend of rationalistic Old Testament criticism. Though Kuenen does not give a history of the problems in hand, still his work has two characteristics which render it eminently useful for the purpose mentioned. It is throughout genetic in its treatment; by not merely presenting results, but also showing the way in which they were reached, it affords an insight into the author's method of working. It is furthermore polemic, especially in the copious notes accompanying the text, which contain a wealth of historic information, all of present interest. On the whole, the author appears as a calm and unprejudiced critic, to whose conclusions, his principles of criticisms once granted, no one can take serious exception. These principles to be sure are, as Kuenen himself does not conceal, from the outset, incompatible with any form of supernaturalism. Occasionally the critic even drops the chain of his argument to protest against a supernaturalistic inference that might be drawn from his conclusions. After granting the historical character of Jeremiah's prophecy against Hananiah, chap. 28:15, and of its fulfillment, he adds the remark that a single case of this kind is utterly inadequate to prove the supernaturalistic position, since history offers numerous other examples of similar coincidences. This is certainly overstepping the limits of impartiality.

On the other hand, Kuenen shows some degree of moderation when compared with the ultra-radicalists of the type of Stade. On p. 40 we meet with this highly interesting statement: "He (Stade) asserts that the prophets of the eighth century always have in view a single nation or particular nations, and that even when they speak of homage being paid by the nations to Jahveh, still the idea of their conversion is foreign to them and to the pre-exilic prophets in general. In order to maintain this view, however, he has been compelled to deny the genuineness of a constantly increasing number of pre-exilic texts, and to declare them 'secondary' or interpolated, often on very weak or even trivial grounds. . . . It is clear that here the dividing line between criticism and hypercriticism is no longer regarded." Quite in keeping with this are Kuenen's remarks concerning Stade's treatment of chaps. 9-11 of Zechariah. "According to my opinion," he says, "the authenticity of not a single passage of the Old Testament would be able to withstand such criticism."

Of concrete results the following may be noted. Several pieces of Isaiah are assigned to a date somewhat earlier or later than in the first edition. Chaps. 40-66 are divided into an exilic and a postexilic part, a division parallel with that into Babylonian and Judean sections. Pre-exilic and Babylonian are chaps. 40-49, 52:1-12, the rest was added chiefly by others in Judea after the exile. The historical pieces of Jeremiah, though not assigned to the prophet himself, are on the main considered reliable.

Also the prophecies against the gentiles are for the greater part retained as authentic. Chaps. 50 and 51, on the other hand, are attributed to an author living in Judea about 400 B. C., who wrote *e persona Jeremiae*. It does not appear how this is to be reconciled with the statement on p. 231, that the people are represented as being in captivity, and that for this reason Jeremiah cannot have written these chapters. Hosea 1 and 3 are founded on facts of the prophet's experience in this sense that they show in what light his married life appeared to him *post factum*. Against Wellhausen, Stade and Cornill those sections in Hosea which treat of Judea are vindicated to the prophet. Joel, according to Kuenen, was written about the middle of the fifth century after the reform of Ezra and Nehemiah. The locusts of chaps. 1 and 2 are taken in a literal sense, but at the same time as a presage of "the day of Jahveh." Of Micah, chaps. 6:1-7:6 were written during the reign of Manasseh, chap. 7:7-20 during the captivity. Chap. 4 and 5 are largely interpolated. Nahum was composed in the seventh century on occasion of the expedition of Cyaxares against Nineveh. Habakkuk wrote chaps. 1-2:9 of the book passing under his name either under Jehoiakim or Jehoiachin, but the rest is not authentic and was written after the exile, no more definite date being given. In regard to Zechariah, finally Kuenen defends the pre-exilic origin of chaps. 9-11 against Stade, who wishes to remand the whole second part of the book to postexilic times. According to Kuenen, only chaps. 12-14 belong to this period, having been written about 400 B. C.