

Schlatter Reception Then: His *New Testament Theology*

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With the appearance of the first volume of Schlatter's *New Testament Theology*¹ in English,² and the publication of the second volume projected in the near future,³ the question arises how Schlatter's work was received when it first appeared in print over eighty years ago. It remains to be seen how North American reviewers will assess Schlatter's contribution to New Testament scholarship at the end of the twentieth century. Since this review process is just beginning to get underway, a look at the historical reception of Schlatter's two-volume *New Testament Theology* will prove to be instructive. After a brief biographical sketch, this article will survey reviewer criticism, sketch Schlatter's or his defenders' responses to these criticisms, evaluate this dialogue, and summarize positive reviews. Some final observations conclude the essay.

Biographical Sketch of Adolf Schlatter⁴

The seventh of nine children, Adolf Schlatter was born in St. Gallen, Switzerland, on August 16, 1852. After completing his theological studies in Basel and Tübingen (1871-1875), Schlatter served as pastor in several Swiss state churches (1875-1880). A brief tenure at the University of Bern (where Schlatter submitted his dissertation on John the Baptist) was followed by a post in Greifswald (1888-1893), a small town in northern Germany. While in Greifswald Schlatter worked in close cooperation with the renowned Greek

lexicographer Hermann Cremer. His next assignment led to Berlin (1893-1898), where he was hired as an alternative to the eminent liberal historian Adolf Harnack, who at that time was enmeshed in controversy for criticizing the Apostle's Creed.

His last major career move took him to Tübingen, where he lectured in New Testament and systematics for almost twenty-five years (1898-1922). During this time, his wife died prematurely (1907). The years after her death proved Schlatter's most productive as a scholar. In rapid succession, he wrote his two-volume *New Testament Theology* (1909/10, rev. ed. 1922/23) and no less than nine critical commentaries on the Gospels, Romans, the Corinthian epistles, the Pastoral epistles, and 1 Peter (published from 1929 until 1937). The year before his death on May 19, 1938, Schlatter published his last major work, a daily devotional called *Kennen wir Jesus? (Do We Know Jesus?)* (1937).

The Composition of Schlatter's *New Testament Theology*⁵

Soon after the death of his wife, Schlatter decided to write a two-volume New Testament theology. In it, he strove for "pure perception, perception that penetrates to the heart of the matter, to what really happened, to who he [Jesus] was."⁶ According to Schlatter, the major obstacle to such a procedure was the "fog" created by the opinions and hypotheses of his scholarly colleagues.⁷ Schlatter's own goal was the presentation of Jesus' mes-

sage as Jesus himself had conveyed it rather than how it was interpreted by others. To this end, Schlatter affirmed the following three fundamental methodological convictions.⁸

First, he distinguished categorically between historical exegesis and “dogmatics.” New Testament theology, conceived as a historical discipline, must come first; only then can the teaching of Scripture be presented systematically. Hence, Schlatter penned two volumes on New Testament theology, then devoted a third volume to dogmatics.

Second, Schlatter pointed out that historical research must confine itself to the exploration of available sources. He refused to go beyond the evidence, and as a result gave little weight to source-critical questions which, in his view, must of necessity remain speculative.

Third, he portrayed Jesus’ teaching in relation to his actual work rather than focusing exclusively on Jesus’ proclamation. In this Schlatter broke decisively with the so-called *lehrbegriffliche Methode* (“concept of doctrine method”)⁹ practiced by most of Schlatter’s contemporaries such as B. Weiss, H. J. Holtzmann, and P. Feine. For Schlatter, Jesus’ word and work constitute an inseparable unity, and both are rooted in Jesus’ messianic consciousness. According to Schlatter, Jesus’ major purpose was not the impartation of dogmatic or ethical instruction (*a Heilslehre*) but the establishment of the saving, kingly rule of God (*Jesus’ Heilswille*).¹⁰ Immediately after completing *Das Wort Jesu*, Schlatter devoted himself to writing the second volume of his New Testament theology, entitled *Die Lehre der Apostel*. The observation that there exists a close relationship between Jesus and the New Testament witnesses served as the foundation for this

work. The continuity between the message of Jesus and apostolic teaching provides the New Testament with a salvation-historical and theological unity not merely accessible by faith but also by historical investigation. This conviction set Schlatter’s work apart from that of many of his contemporaries who, according to Schlatter, presented the relationship between Jesus and the New Testament writers as “torn by a thousand contradictions.”¹¹ In his attempt to exhibit the continuity between the New Testament witnesses and the word and work of Jesus, Schlatter started with “the convictions represented by Jesus’ followers” (Matthew, James, Jude, John, and Peter), then treated Paul and the theology of the “coworkers of the apostles” (Mark, Luke, Hebrews, 2 Peter), and finally discussed the “convictions prevailing in the churches.” As Werner Neuer observes, one of the most pervasive characteristics of Schlatter’s work is his effort to demonstrate common ground in the thought of the various New Testament writers. At the same time, original elements in an author’s contribution are acknowledged as well, so that New Testament theology emerges as a “unity in diversity.”¹²

The Reception of *New Testament Theology*

Eleven reviews of one or both volumes of Schlatter’s *New Testament Theology* were published in Germany between 1909 and 1923. Of these reviews, nine are of one or both volumes of the first edition (1909/10), while two are of the first volume of the second edition. Notably, *Die Theologie der Apostel* did not elicit a single review. These reviews range in analysis with four positive (Leipoldt, Römer, Beck, Schöllkopf), three mixed (Windisch, Bultmann,

Dibelius), and four negative (Kühl, Holtzmann, Knopf, Bauer). The following is a list of reviews in chronological order of publication.

Reviews of <i>Das Wort Jesu</i> (1909)			
Year	Reviewer	Reviewer's Credentials	General Assessment
1909	Ernst Kühl	Professor of NT in Göttingen	Mostly negative
1909	Johannes Leipoldt	Professor of NT in Halle	Very positive
1909	Christian Römer	Dean at Tübingen	Very positive
Reviews of <i>Das Wort Jesu</i> (1909) and <i>Die Lehre der Apostel</i> (1910)			
Year	Reviewer	Reviewer's Credentials	General Assessment
1910	H. J. Holtzmann	Professor emeritus of NT	Very negative
1910	Hans Windisch	Privatdozent of NT in Leipzig	Mixed
1911 / 12	Rudolf Bultmann	Privatdozent of NT in Marburg	Mixed
1911 / 12	Schöllkopf	Württemberg pastor	Very positive
1913	Martin Dibelius	Privatdozent of NT in Berlin	Mixed
1913	Rudolf Knopf	Privatdozent of NT in Marburg	Mostly negative
Reviews of <i>Die Geschichte des Christus</i> (1920, 1921)			
Year	Reviewer	Reviewer's Credentials	General Assessment
1921	G. Beck	Württemberg pastor	Very positive
1923	Walter Bauer	Professor of NT in Göttingen	Mostly negative

Reviewer Criticism of *New Testament Theology*

Only a brief summary of the major criticisms of Schlatter's work can be provided here, followed by Schlatter's response.¹³ One notes six recurring criticisms directed at substance and style. Regarding matters of substance, critics take exception to Schlatter's approach to history, his dogmatic bent, and his overemphasis on the will in relation to the cognitive domain of faith. With regard to style, Schlatter is faulted for the way he deals with his opponents, his alleged lack of humility, and his difficult writing style.

His Approach to History

One of the most frequent charges advanced by Schlatter's critics is that he unduly neglects *Einleitungsfragen* (intro-

ductory matters), history-of-religions issues, and literary questions such as source criticism.¹⁴ Schlatter's opponents contend that he glosses over the critical issues pertaining to the Gospels rather than facing them directly. Some, such as Holtzmann, consider Schlatter to be unduly hostile and reactionary toward the historical-critical method and the history-of-religions school and feel that he stereotypes those who hold differing views.¹⁵ Also, his critics contend that he intermingles the christologies of the Synoptics and John indiscriminately without adequately differentiating between them. According to these critics, the distinction between older material and portions added later is part of historical research, so it is not irrelevant which of the Synoptic texts is given priority.¹⁶ Indeed, they

charge Schlatter himself with operating under the assumption of a source theory, and a dubious one at that: the notion of Matthean priority, defended on the basis of scholarly convenience rather than historical considerations.¹⁷ Bultmann, though not unappreciative of Schlatter's work, stands as one of his most incisive critics. He finds the historical element "entirely missing" in Schlatter's presentation, faulting him also for his total neglect of source criticism and his consequent leveling of the Synoptics and John. Bultmann also charges Schlatter with naiveté regarding his own presuppositions, commenting that Schlatter only deceives himself¹⁸ when he claims the ability to see nothing but what is in the sources and to manage entirely without inferences and hypothetical reconstructions of his own. Is it not an inference, Bultmann asks, when Schlatter claims that Jesus' consciousness of his birth was an essential part of his self-understanding, or when Schlatter hypothesizes that Jesus' realization of the failure of his call to repentance convinced him that he had to die? Bultmann asks where the sources state these principles, or where they say that the disciples considered the offense of the cross to be not primarily the Messiah's suffering but his rejection by Israel? "Overall," Bultmann writes, "one parts with this work that contains so much good with a feeling of pain: how can a mind so receptive to the purely religious, so unclouded by prejudice, be so incapable of historical work?"¹⁹ Holtzmann and others fault Schlatter for his conservative stance on the authorship of disputed New Testament writings such as 1 Peter, the Pastorals, the Gospel of John, or the Apocalypse.²⁰

His Dogmatic Bent

Schlatter is also charged with an artificial unity based upon an arbitrary selection of texts. Some of his critics allege that Schlatter simply discusses his favorite passages of Scripture in meditational form. This tendency, they claim, proves he acts as a dogmatist after all. Knopf speaks for many when he says, "The dogmatist speaks to us in the book from the first page to the last, the systematician who flaunts a peculiar thought world and rediscovers it in the thought world of the New Testament."²¹ Holtzmann flatly states that Schlatter's work is Christian dogmatics (*christliche Glaubenslehre*) rather than New Testament theology.²² By choosing a few select themes (such as the cross and the regal will and status of Jesus, the relationship between grace and judgment or between repentance and the kingdom) and by stressing them in his discussion, Schlatter creates the appearance of a certain unity in the New Testament writings, but this exists as an artificial and self-made coherence—a product of Schlatter the dogmatist rather than a reflection of New Testament teaching.²³ His work should be recognized as an exercise in unhistorical biblicism that glosses over discrepancies, diversity, and contradictions.²⁴

His Overemphasis on the Will in Relation to the Cognitive Domain of Faith

Some critics take exception to Schlatter's emphasis on the will over against the cognitive domain of faith. They frequently consider this to reflect an over-reaction against the unilateral focus on Jesus' teachings by the *lehrebegriffliche Methode*. Bultmann in particular feels Schlatter overdoes his polemic against

intellectualism.²⁵ Holtzmann likewise charges Schlatter with unduly demanding for everything to reach the will. But what, he asks, are we to make of 1 Peter 3:19-20 or John's discourse about the *Logos*?²⁶ These passages seem to be aimed primarily at the cognitive domain.

His Failure to Interact with Other Scholars

Schlatter's critics fault him for his lack of interaction with other scholars, his stereotyping of those who hold differing views, and his polemic tone. They judge Schlatter's lack of explicit interaction with his opponents' views "an indulgence unbecoming of a first-rate theologian."²⁷ Schlatter should name his opponents and cite their respective works for the benefit of his readers. As it is, Schlatter's work stands removed from the mainstream of New Testament scholarship.²⁸ Again, it is Bultmann who complains that Schlatter often mocks and injures his opponents.²⁹ Bauer, too, takes offense by Schlatter's denunciation of those who engage in "speculations," have "confidence in their own conclusions," and are "dreamers who give themselves to speculative reconstructions."³⁰

His Alleged Lack of Humility

Some critics object to Schlatter's use of absolutist words such as "always," "never," and "certainly." They conclude that Schlatter operates on the basis of the certainty of faith rather than in the realm of the relativity of historical scholarship. Bauer, for instance, points out how Schlatter seems to know precisely why the sources are silent regarding a particular issue or why they say what they say, or why one apostle depicts a given matter in one way and another New Testament

author in a different way. With thinly veiled sarcasm, he comments how issues that have eluded definitive solutions for centuries present no problems for Schlatter, who solves them with enviable ease. A case in point is Schlatter's explanation of Jesus' use of the term "Son of Man" in terms of Jesus' effort to accentuate his commonality with man. Schlatter's use of absolutist language and simplistic solutions seem naive and betray the fact that they are a product of faith rather than the results of a judicious use of the historical method.³¹

His Difficult Writing Style

Some think Schlatter's style resembles the style of "delphic oracles."³² They lament that he frequently expresses himself in awkward, even obtuse, ways and that his idiosyncratic style makes it difficult to follow his line of argument.

Schlatter's Response to His Critics

The cumulative force of these charges weighed heavily on Schlatter. Often he felt at a loss as to why his work met with such serious criticism.³³ In particular, he found it difficult to defend himself against the various charges leveled against his work since these tended to be general rather than taking the form of concrete objections. "I will not be able to enter into dialogue [with my critics]" Schlatter lamented, "unless I am told, 'here you overlook something or this or that view is wrong.'"³⁴ Nevertheless, while Schlatter took these charges seriously, he insisted that when his rationale for his chosen procedure was taken into account, it constituted a marked advance over against competing contemporary models. Below is a sketch of Schlatter's response (or that of his defenders) against the above-listed

criticisms accompanied by brief comments of evaluation.

His Approach to History

To the charge of neglecting *Einleitungsfragen* and literary questions such as source criticism, Schlatter responds that these matters serve as a prerequisite for New Testament theology rather than its proper subject. He therefore feels no need to defend his views on these matters at length, but rather asserts his conclusions at the outset of his work. Moreover, Schlatter notes that the inability to solve the riddle of the exact nature of the interrelationships between the Synoptic Gospels does not necessitate uncertainty concerning the history of Jesus, for the Gospels mutually confirm each other in this regard. Jesus' teaching is straightforward and univocal, so the interpreter of Jesus should not speak of the "words of Jesus" but of "Jesus' word." Only what turns out to be genuinely in doubt owing to the diversity of the Gospel accounts may therefore be set aside.³⁵

Moreover, Schlatter rightly points out that his opponents' skeptical stance toward the sources' reliability is rooted in the Enlightenment thinking of Descartes (the "atheistic method").³⁶ For Schlatter, historical work applied to the Gospels means to illumine the inner logic, dynamic, and connections underlying the events portrayed in these writings. But because he does not embrace Cartesian thought, and thus does not share its epistemological skepticism, Schlatter steadfastly refuses to pit the Jesus of history against the Christ of faith, as Bultmann and many others did in the tradition of D. F. Strauss.³⁷ Rather, he affirms the New Testament writers' continuity with the thought of Jesus. In this regard, Schlatter

has been followed by much of recent evangelical scholarship. Thus, the Tübingen scholar Peter Stuhlmacher self-consciously sees himself as operating in the tradition of Schlatter, as taking his cue from him.³⁸

His Dogmatic Bent

Ironically, while Schlatter himself claims to be a historian who emphasizes the priority of historical exegesis over dogmatics, frequently he receives criticism for being oblivious to the true nature of historical research and for operating as a dogmatician. Among those defending Schlatter against this charge was Römer.³⁹ He contrasts Schlatter's work with treatments where a scholar's general reconstruction becomes the schema into which details are fitted whether they suit this overall pattern or not. A total impression is abstracted before the work is studied in detail; what does not cohere is declared corrupt or interpolated, and it is alleged that Paul was himself unaware of breaks in his logic, as were other New Testament writers. With fine irony, Römer observes that such interpreters would rather charge Paul with inconsistency than suspect incongruencies in their own thinking. So-called "contradictions and inner tensions" seem to characterize Jesus or Paul, simply because no effort is made to look at all the evidence first. And this is called "scientific method"! To the contrary, Römer charges, this method is riddled with problems of its own, creating yet further difficulties. Indeed, Schlatter himself, in his treatise on New Testament theology and dogmatics, asks the question whether the "scientific method" can truly comprehend its subject in the practice of New Testament theology.⁴⁰ As Römer points out, one who, like Schlatter, seeks to chal-

lenge a conventional “scientific” method will of course be called “unscientific” by proponents of this traditional approach. Some people’s difficulty in understanding Schlatter relates to the unconventional nature of his method. But to charge Schlatter with dogmatism merely because he fails to conform to commonly accepted scholarly procedures in his day begs the question and betrays a defensive posture rather than doing justice to Schlatter’s work.

Indeed, it may be argued that, contrary to the charges made by his critics, the approach underlying Schlatter’s *New Testament Theology* is not dogmatics but biblical theology. The practice of biblical theology, of course, still involves the selection of major themes in the respective New Testament writings. Yet while one may differ with Schlatter’s particular reconstruction, the charge that “the dogmatist is speaking to us from the first to the last page” seems unfair.

His Overemphasis on the Will in Relation to the Cognitive Domain of Faith

Schlatter was convinced that New Testament scholarship focused unduly on Jesus’ sayings and teachings at the expense of his appeal to the will. Not merely right belief, but repentance and trust were the intended results of Jesus’ ministry according to Schlatter. Schlatter feels the Gospels themselves vindicate his position when read with an open mind. For him, the foremost task of the New Testament theologian is “a pure, sincere listening to Jesus.” But Schlatter did not mean that Jesus taught like a German university lecturer. “We must not make Jesus a Professor of Theology and answerman to all questions currently moving the

church,” Schlatter writes. “We must allow Jesus to say what he himself wanted to say rather than burdening him with our modern questions, construing an answer to our modern questions from his words.”⁴¹ In this, Schlatter felt further confirmed by A. Schweitzer’s then-recent work on nineteenth-century life of Jesus research. In hindsight, Schlatter’s consideration of Jesus’ work alongside his word and his effort to look at Jesus’ life holistically clearly constitutes an abiding contribution to New Testament scholarship. Many recent interpreters have sounded similar calls to consider Jesus’ acts together with his words. By emphasizing Jesus’ appeal to the will, Schlatter in no way meant to minimize the contribution made by Jesus’ verbal proclamation. He rather opposed the tendency of characterizing Jesus primarily as a teacher of content to be believed rather than of commands to be obeyed. Charging Schlatter with neglecting the cognitive domain of faith therefore seems to misrepresent his true intentions.

His Failure to Interact with Other Scholars

To his critics’ charge that he fails to make explicit reference to his opponents in his writings, Schlatter replies that he does not want his work to be distracted from the apprehension of Jesus and the New Testament writings themselves. Indeed, “hearing [the text] is imperiled when at the same time we are stormed by a jumble of voices. Stillness is the condition for hearing: it demands restricting our communion to the one who now speaks to us.”⁴² According to Schlatter, the major sources for Jesus are the Gospels, so the historian’s primary task is to read the Gospels. And the availability of these Gospels

for everyone to read allows everyone to judge for himself whether Schlatter interprets them accurately or not.⁴³ Generally, it is indeed helpful to refer to one's opponents. But constant interaction with opposing views can cloud the issues. Schlatter is right: the primary sources for the understanding of Jesus are the Gospels, and the one who seeks to construe a New Testament theology must read the Gospels. This is the standard by which any New Testament theology should be judged: how does it measure up against the primary texts, and does it reflect a thorough reading of the New Testament writings? It is precisely the fact that Schlatter focuses his work on Scripture rather than on interaction with contemporary scholars that allows his *New Testament Theology* to remain relevant to this day. His detractors' writings have not fared as well, in part because of their over-commitment to momentary scholarly concerns.

His Alleged Lack of Humility

Schlatter devoted an entire essay to the issue of faith and scholarship in which he took to task the "atheistic" character of contemporary biblical scholarship.⁴⁴ He excoriated theological scholarship for its rootedness in Cartesian doubt and skepticism, which he believed led to a dichotomy between faith and reason, and between history and theology. Questioning the legitimacy of the Cartesian model in the first place seemed, according to Schlatter, the only way to overcome this chasm. While he frequently sounds confident in his conclusions, this is in part a function of his confidence in the reliability of his sources, for he thinks these sources enable a correct understanding of Jesus and the early church. The tone of

assurance in Schlatter's writing could indeed convey the notion of arrogance. To be sure, while part of the confidence pervading Schlatter's work doubtless arises from his thorough study of Scripture, a certain dogmatism and polemic thrust are undeniable. Apart from his pietistic background, however, Schlatter's idiosyncrasy in this regard may at least in part be explained by his personal circumstances. In many ways, he virtually stood alone in his day in defending a more conservative theological position. More than once he expressed dismay at the notion that he had to contend with an entire phalanx of interpreters who opposed his views.⁴⁵ The competing paradigm, the history-of-religions approach practiced by Holtzmann, B. Weiss, and, later, Bultmann, studied Jesus and the emergence of New Testament teaching largely from an evolutionary perspective rather than the vantage point of divine revelation. Finally, Schlatter's self-acknowledged stance as a believing scholar also provoked some of his contemporaries. Again, however, Schlatter's approach has begun to find support in recent years through the work of G. Maier and M. Noll.⁴⁶

His Difficult Writing Style

Schlatter contends the issue is not primarily his awkwardness of expression but the element of mystery attached to his subject matter. The coexistence of Law and grace or of temptation and forgiveness of sin are difficult to explain by anyone, because these matters are complex and demand spiritual appraisal. Launching a counter-offensive of his own, Schlatter charges that post-Enlightenment scholarship has undertaken to remove every element of mystery in order to master its subject. Rationalism, according to

Schlatter, is the antithesis of historical scholarship.⁴⁷ But Schlatter's protestations notwithstanding, the difficulty of his style has indeed proven to be a major stumbling block for the modern reception of his thought. Curiously, Schlatter's style is quite uneven, and passages of great simplicity, clarity, and beauty alternate with convoluted sentences whose meaning is difficult to discern. Thus, the translator must alleviate this potential obstacle as much as possible by choosing appropriate renderings.

Reviewer Praise for Schlatter's *New Testament Theology*

One of the interesting features of the reception of Schlatter's *New Testament Theology* is the mixed nature of reviews. Even those highly critical of his work do not offer wholesale denunciations of Schlatter's writings, preferring to combine harsh criticism with high praise.⁴⁸ Four positive features of Schlatter's work are mentioned with particular frequency: his consideration of Jesus' work as well as his word, his emphasis on the Jewish background of the Gospels and the life of Jesus, his intuitive grasp of the essence of Pauline or Johannine theology, and the spiritually nurturing character of Schlatter's writing.

His Consideration of Jesus' Work as well as His Word

Schlatter contends that Jesus was not primarily a teacher, and that his message did not merely constitute a system of new concepts, doctrines, or religious insights. Rather, the Gospel presents Jesus' ministry primarily in active terms: he seeks to effect repentance, foster a decision of the will, offer forgiveness (rather than merely provide instruction regarding God's gracious disposition), and grant divine

forgiveness (rather than merely teaching or defining it). Thus, Schlatter does not merely gather similar passages and then condense them as aspects of Jesus' theology. This strategy is frequently considered an improvement over against earlier studies of Jesus even by Schlatter's opponents.⁴⁹ Interestingly, Bultmann faults Holtzmann here precisely for failing to do what Schlatter does. According to Bultmann, Holtzmann places too much weight on the intellectual aspects of spiritual life in the New Testament. But the driving forces of history, Bultmann contends, are not theoretical ideas but religious and ethical forces.⁵⁰

His Emphasis on the Jewish Background of the Gospels and the Life of Jesus

Leipoldt commends Schlatter for his excellent refutation of the "modern legend" that early Christianity was something entirely non-Jewish, and many others agree that Schlatter attained success in his efforts to demonstrate the essentially Jewish background of Jesus, Paul, and early Christianity.⁵¹ In an age when the history-of-religions school related early Christianity primarily to Hellenism, Schlatter was a lonely voice. But his stance has received abundant vindication in recent scholarship. A case in point is Schlatter's advocacy of the Palestinian provenance of the Fourth Gospel (now supported decisively by the Qumran discoveries) at a time when it was widely interpreted in Hellenistic terms.

His Intuitive Grasp of the Essence of Pauline and Johannine Theology⁵²

Windisch calls Schlatter "one of today's most thoughtful and perceptive theologians." He comments that the section on

Jesus' piety is "particularly profound and beautiful," and sees the chapter on Paul's theology as among Schlatter's most valuable and penetrating scholarly contributions.⁵³ Bultmann considers Schlatter's grasp of the religious substance of the New Testament to be his greatest strength. He especially commends Schlatter for his treatment of ethical questions, such as his discussion of the "new commandment" in the chapter on Jesus' call to repentance.⁵⁴

The Spiritually Nurturing Character of Schlatter's Writing⁵⁵

Even Schlatter's harshest critics are virtually unanimous in commending him for the profundity of his theological insight and the spiritually nurturing character of his writing, which suggests that it may have been primarily Schlatter's defiance of existing paradigms that led to his scholarly isolation in his day. Notably, Schlatter's harshest critics were part of the German theological establishment, while his most grateful readers were local pastors and laymen.⁵⁶

Final Observations

The mixed nature of reviews Schlatter received for his *New Testament Theology* reflects the difficulty his contemporaries had in evaluating his work. Was Schlatter "incapable of historical work"?⁵⁷ Did "the dogmatician speak to us . . . from the first page to the last"?⁵⁸ Was Schlatter an anti-intellectual fideist? Is that why he failed to interact explicitly with his opponents? Does this also explain the absolute tone characteristic of Schlatter's writings, which was regarded as naiveté at best or arrogance at worst by Schlatter's opponents? And do Schlatter's writings resemble "delphic oracles"?⁵⁹

It is not the primary purpose of the

present essay to adjudicate between Schlatter and his critics. After all, more recent responses to Schlatter's work must be considered before a more definitive assessment of his contribution to New Testament scholarship can be made.⁶⁰ At a preliminary level, however, the survey of reviewer criticism and Schlatter's response suggests that Schlatter repeatedly and very effectively countered the charges brought against his work. A more conclusive evaluation of the legacy bequeathed by Adolf Schlatter to modern scholarship will be possible only as part of a survey of reactions to Schlatter's writings in recent scholarship.

APPENDIX: Reviews of Schlatter's *New Testament Theology* in Order of Publication

1. Ernst Kühl, Review of *Das Wort Jesu*, in *Die Theologie der Gegenwart* 3 (1909) 57-65. Response by Adolf Schlatter in *Evangelisches Kirchenblatt für Württemberg* 71 (1910) 25-27.

2. Johannes Leipoldt, Review of *Das Wort Jesu*, in *Theologisches Literaturblatt* 30 (1909) 363-366.

3. Christian Römer, Review of *Das Wort Jesu*, in *Evangelisches Kirchenblatt für Württemberg* 70 (1909) 157-158. Response defending Schlatter in *Evangelisches Kirchenblatt für Württemberg* 71 (1910) 137-139.

4. Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 35 (1910) 299-303.

5. Hans Windisch, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 52 (1910) 219-231.

6. Rudolf Bultmann, Review of *Das*

Wort Jesu and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 8 (1911/12) 440-443.

7. Schöllkopf, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 8 (1911/12) 18-24.

8. Martin Dibelius, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Die christliche Welt* 27 (1913) 938-941.

9. Rudolf Knopf, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 86 (1913) 634-640.

10. G. Beck, Review of *Die Geschichte des Christus*, in *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 17 (1921) 230-234.

11. Walter Bauer, Review of *Die Geschichte des Christus*, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 48 (1923) 77-80.

ENDNOTES

¹The two volumes of the first edition bore the titles *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Erster Teil: Das Wort Jesu* (Calw & Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1909) and *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Zweiter Teil: Die Lehre der Apostel* (Calw & Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1910). The titles of the two volumes of the second edition were *Die Geschichte des Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1920; rev. ed. 1923) and *Die Theologie der Apostel* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1922). For convenience's sake, both the first and the second edition will be referred to in the remainder of this two-part essay as Schlatter's *New Testament Theology* (in italics).

²*The History of the Christ: The Foundation of New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).

³*The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker, forthcoming).

⁴See esp. Werner Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter: Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1996); *Adolf Schlatter: A Biography of Germany's Premier Biblical Theologian*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); and "Schlatter, Adolf (1852-1938)," in *Evangelisches Lexicon für Theologie und Gemeinde, Vol. 3*, ed. Helmut Burkhardt and Otto Betz (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1994); and the entries by Robert W. Yarbrough on Adolf Schlatter in *Handbook of 20th Century Evangelical Bible Scholars*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker); and *Dictionary of Major Bible Interpreters*, ed. Donald McKim (Downers Grove: InterVarsity), both forthcoming.

⁵Cf. especially Neuer, *Schlatter* (1996) 464-480.

⁶*An Christine*, 15. 10. 1908, quoted in Neuer, *Schlatter* (1996) 465. Translations from the German in this essay are mine.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸On this, see Neuer, *Schlatter* (1996) 467-470.

⁹Cf. Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978) 46.

¹⁰Cf. Neuer, *Schlatter* (1996) 469, referring to Schlatter, *Das Wort Jesu*, 358-429.

¹¹Cf. R 233f., quoted in Neuer, *Schlatter*, 477.

¹²Cf. Neuer, *Schlatter* (1996) 477-478. Note the commendation by M. Kähler in *Kähler an Schlatter*, 14. 11. 1909, quoted in Neuer, *Schlatter* (1996) 479.

¹³The following survey focuses primarily on the reviews of Schlatter's work published between 1909 and 1923 as listed above. Only occasional reference is made to the reception of Schlatter's work in recent scholarship. On modern Schlatter reception and relevance, see the second part of this essay, "Schlatter Reception Now: His *New Testament Theology*" by Robert Yarbrough in this issue of *SBJT*.

¹⁴Cf. e.g. Rudolf Bultmann, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 8 (1911/12) 442; Henrich Julius Holtzmann, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 35 (1910) 302. Note the discussion by Neuer, *Schlatter* (1996) 472.

¹⁵Holtzmann, 300-301; Bultmann, 442.

¹⁶Ernest Kühl, Review of *Das Wort Jesu*, in *Die Theologie der Gegenwart* 3 (1909) 61-62.

¹⁷Martin Dibelius, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Die christliche Welt* 27 (1913) 939; Holtzmann, 300.

¹⁸Cf. Bultmann, 443; the term "self-deception" is echoed in Walter Bauer, Review of *Die Geschichte des Christus*, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 48 (1923) 78.

¹⁹Bultmann, 442-443.

²⁰Holtzmann, 300.

- ²¹Rudolf Knopf, Review of *Das Wort Jesu* and *Die Lehre der Apostel*, in *Theologische studien und Kritiken* 86 (1913) 635-636; similarly, the New Testament scholars Bauer, Bultmann, Dibelius, Holtzmann, and Windisch.
- ²²Holtzmann, 299.
- ²³Kühl, 63-64; Bauer, 78.
- ²⁴Holtzmann, 302.
- ²⁵Bultmann, 442.
- ²⁶Holtzmann, 302.
- ²⁷Kühl, 64, echoed by Holtzmann, 300.
- ²⁸Holtzmann, 301.
- ²⁹Bultmann, 442.
- ³⁰Bauer, 78.
- ³¹Cf. especially Bauer, 77-80.
- ³²Kühl, 65.
- ³³See in the foreword to the second edition of *Das Wort Jesu* entitled *Die Geschichte des Christus*, 6.
- ³⁴*An Lütgert*, 15. 1. 1910, cited in Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 474.
- ³⁵Schlatter, "Response to Kühl," 26-27.
- ³⁶Cf. Schlatter, "Atheistic Methods in Theology," in Neuer, Schlatter (1995) 211-225. See also his *Die philosophische Arbeit seit Cartesius. Ihr ethischer und religiöser Ertrag*, in *Beiträge zur Forderung christlicher Theologie* 10 (1906).
- ³⁷This is rightly noted by Bauer, 78.
- ³⁸P. Stuhlmacher, *Jesus of Nazareth, Christ of Faith*, trans. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993) 1-7, 38. See also Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994) 21-23.
- ³⁹Christian Römer, Review of *Das Wort Jesu*, in *Evangelisches Kirchenblatt für Württemberg* 71 (1910) 137-139.
- ⁴⁰Cf. Adolf Schlatter, "The Theology of the New Testament and Dogmatics," trans. Robert Morgan, in Robert Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2/25 (London: SCM, 1973) 117-166. Now also in Neuer, Schlatter (1995) 159-210.
- ⁴¹Schlatter, "Response to Kühl," 25.
- ⁴²This reference is from Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 435, quoted in Yarbrough, "Schlatter" in *Handbook*.
- ⁴³Schlatter, "Response to Kühl," 26.
- ⁴⁴Originally published in *BFCT* 9 (1905), this essay is most readily accessible in translation in Neuer, Schlatter (1995) 211-225.
- ⁴⁵Cf. *An Theodor*, 22. 1. 1910, quoted in Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 475. Cf. also Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 479-480.
- ⁴⁶Cf. Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994); and Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).
- ⁴⁷Schlatter, "Response to Kühl," 25-26.
- ⁴⁸Cf. Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 470, who cites as examples the reviews of Bauer, Bultmann, Holtzmann, Knopf, and Kühl.
- ⁴⁹Cf. Römer, 157. This is noted also by Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 471.
- ⁵⁰Bultmann, 434.
- ⁵¹Johannes Leipoldt, Review of *Das Wort Jesu*, in *Theologisches Literaturblatt* 30 (1909) 366; cf. Dibelius, 940; and Knopf, 635.
- ⁵²Apart from the reviews referred to below, see also Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 470.
- ⁵³Windisch, 225, 228; similarly, Knopf, 635-636, 639; and Bauer, 80. Still, Windisch sides with Kühl's critical review (230, n. 1).
- ⁵⁴Bultmann, 441-42; cf. also Holtzmann, 302.
- ⁵⁵Cf. for further examples Neuer, Schlatter (1996) 471.
- ⁵⁶To the above cited commendations of Schlatter's *New Testament Theology* may be added the comments made by the British scholar P. T. Forsyth in "The Faith of Jesus," *Expository Times* 21 (1909-10) 8-9 (cited in *Evangelisch-protestantischer Kirchenblatt für Württemberg* 71 [1910] 94, by E. Nestle) who compares Schlatter's work with Holtzmann's as follows: "I remark in passing how I am struck with the moral and historic insight of this book in contrast with the intellectual acumen and fertility of combination of Holtzmann. It is all the difference between sympathetic interpretation and analytic construction. The one seems written from within, the other from without; the one with radiance, the other with brilliance; the one so steady, the other so illuminating; the one so grave, the other so keen; the one so full of grace, the other of truth" (emphasis added). I am indebted to W. Neuer for this reference.
- ⁵⁷Bultmann, 443.
- ⁵⁸Knopf, 635.
- ⁵⁹Kühl, 65.
- ⁶⁰This is the subject of "Schlatter Reception Now: His *New Testament Theology*" by Robert Yarbrough in this issue of *SBJT*.