

The Bible in Modern Scholarship, edited by J. Philip Hyatt (Abingdon Press: Nashville) 1965 Papers read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature

James Muilenburg, The "Office" of the Prophet in Ancient Israel

p.77 Unhappily, there has been a proclivity to press our inquiries too far in all the areas to which I have referred. We are all aware, for example, of the excesses of source analysis in the early decades of our Society's existence, or of the reduction of literary compositions to mere snippets, or of the common confusion of strophes with independent poems, or of the dissection of traditional historical criticism to such a degree that the original work all but vanishes or disintegrates beneath the deftness of our analytical skill. Or we have witnessed the invocation of the cult in every possible situation, with the upshot that psychological and historical understanding is somewhat cavalierly dismissed by the pejorative words liberalism and historicism. Yet these excesses by no means invalidate the methods themselves. Finally, let it be said that the results we achieve in our study will in large part be conditioned by the techniques we employ. The exclusive use of historical criticism will often yield one set of results; form criticism and tradition-historical criticism without reference to historical and literary criticism will often yield quite another.

p.80 p. 79 The affinities of the Deuteronomistic traditions with those of the Elohist have long been observed. Now in order to evaluate the relation of the two bodies of tradition it is essential to reconsider the date of the Elohist. The arguments supporting an eighth-century date are increasingly difficult to uphold, and it seems probable that we should assign it to a much earlier period.

The writer has long maintained that the Yahwist depends upon the oral traditions of the northern Elohist, above all in the sections in Exodus which recount the conclusion of the covenant and the giving of the Torah. This, as we shall see, brings the origins of the sacred traditions of Deuteronomy and those of the Elohist into close temporal connection.

Footnote 19 See the introductions to the OT of C. Steuernagle, S.R. Driver, O. Eissfeldt, R. H. Pfeiffer, A. Weiser, W. O. E. Oesterley, and T. H. Robinson, the commentaries of Alfred Bertholet, Steuernagle, and S. R. Driver, and Johannes Hempel, Die althebräische Literatur und ihr hellenistisch-jüdisches Nachleben (1934), p.139; Karl Budde, op. cit., pp. 177-224; Adam C. Welch, Deuteronomy: the Framework to the Code (1932), passim; R. Brinker, The Influence of Sanctuaries in Early Israel (1945), pp.196f., p.211: "Deuteronomy is almost entirely based on a document which is generally called E." Perhaps the most eloquent witness to the close affinities of the Elohist and Deuteronomistic writers is the way in which the same passages have been assigned by some scholars to the Elohist, by others to the Deuteronomists. Many of the passages which were heretofore ascribed to the Elohist are now assigned to the Deuteronomist by Martin Noth and others.

p.89 The Wellhausen school tended to view the prophets as isolated, solitary figures, monolithic men rising precipitately into their times, breaking into history as sudden mutations. The situation is, of course, quite otherwise today. We recognize clearly how the prophets rise out of the past, how the traditions of the Mosaic age or associated with it condition much of what they have to say. What was once viewed as unique and unprecedented is now seen as typical and representative.