

A Rigid Scrutiny. Critical Essays on the Old Testament by Ivan Engnell. Translated from the Swedish and edited by John T. Willis with the collaboration of Helmer Ringgren. (Vanderbilt University Press: Nashville) 1969

p. 53 It is not necessary for a person to have a very profound understanding of the similarities between the various cultures of the ancient Near East to be able to see that the whole literary-critical system is based upon a complete misunderstanding of the actual situation. It reflects a modern, anachronistic book view, and attempts to interpret ancient biblical literature in modern categories, an interpretatio europaeica moderna. A modified or moderate literary-critical approach is not sufficient to evaluate this problem properly. What is needed is a radical departure from this whole system. No parallel, continuous, written sources of the Pentateuch like those which literary critics presuppose have ever existed.

p. 54 Obviously, obscurities and discrepancies are to be expected at the cultural and linguistic level of the Old Testament. But, in reality, they are greatly exaggerated because, in innumerable instances, our western desk logic fails to appreciate the Semitic way of thinking.

But the only really relevant evidence in favor of the existence of continuous documents in the Pentateuch would be that each writer maintains his own unique style throughout.

p. 55 Just as serious, if not more so, is the fact that the different documents are not consistent in their use of the divine names. And yet this is alleged to be the mark of their uniqueness! The fact that in such cases zealous advocates of the documentary hypothesis change the divine name in order to achieve complete consistency is the best argument against the soundness of this theory. Such manipulation does not make the dream come true. To some extent, there is actually a certain constant alternation of divine names, but a closer examination shows that this is not due to an alternation of documents, but to an intentional stylistic use by those who handed down the tradition. This alternation is intimately connected with the idea that different divine names have different ideological overtones and, consequently, different effects.

p. 124 But even though these two aspects of prophetism ((i.e. the institutional and the inspirational)) are often very clearly distinct and well-developed, in reality, they must not be played off against each other as mutually exclusive alternatives. On the contrary, they both represent attributes and characteristics inherent in an indispensable to the idea of "prophet." It is certainly true that the personal inspirational element can have a very prominent place within the framework of the institutional. But recent research in Israelite prophetism has been characterized by a strong emphasis on the institutional aspect. The result is that the terms prophet and priest have come to be understood as more or less equivalent, which conflicts sharply with the earlier idea that they are diametrically opposed to each other.