

Van Seters: Yahwist as a Historian by Jintae Kim, Nyack College on 4/4/98 (OTQ#17)

	<i>Van Seters' Position</i>	<i>Criticism (Contribution or problematic)</i>
J as creative author; No E; P discounted	<p>1) An antiquarian historian: not collector of tradition but creative author(Contra-Gunkel)</p> <p>2) No E; P not an independent composition but a secondary supplement to that of J (Contra-Wellhausen).</p>	<p>1) Distinctive element of Gen 1-11 from Gen 12-50 solved by using the comparative historiography as method for studying the OT history and genealogy and itinerary as frameworks for units of tradition.</p> <p>2) Problematic nature of E and P has been answered.</p>
J as a whole corpus of Pentateuch	Unity – Holistic picture : Pre-Priestly corpus of the Pentateuch as a whole. (Contra-Wellhausen) Pentateuch is not built upon source material. No need to postulate compositional stages.	<p>Real contribution:</p> <p>1) Holistic picture.</p> <p>2) Emphasis upon historical nature of Genesis.</p>
Exilic Dating	<p>1) Exilic after D and Deuteronomic history (Joshua – Kings): Connection between Yahwist's universalism and Deutero-Isaiahic universalism and advancement on Deuteronomic historian's concept of covenant promises.</p>	<p>1) Exilic dating is highly unlikely.</p> <p>a. Scholarly consensus is that the patriarchal narratives were cast in written form based upon oral traditions in early days of monarchy, thus Genesis shows a trace of monarchical time.</p> <p>b. Doubtful connection: Yahwist's and Deutero-Isaiahic, Deuteronomic historian's universalism.</p>
	<p>2) Evidence: Style of historiography & fine literal literary quality, which were not used until 5-6th century (Example of Greek literature).</p> <p>Influence of contemporary historiography and literary style in ANE and Ancient West in 5-6th century.</p>	<p>2) Dating of ancient historiography and literacy: Based upon arbitrary and subjective comparison drawn from Greece. Silence of evidence does not mean negative evidence.</p> <p>3) Negative evidences: Patriarchs were depicted as performing actions forbidden in the law or offensive to exilic people.</p> <p>a. Abraham planting a sacred tree, Jacob raising sacred pillars; b. Abraham marries a half-sister; Jacob marries two sisters; c. Weaknesses: Abraham and Isaac lying to people.</p>
Genre of Genesis: Antiquarian history	A history book based on the canons of ancient historiography, both ANE and Ancient West. The historian created national tradition as reflected in Genesis.	1) Genre identification: Highly subjective enterprise. It is the case with Van Seters' relating Israel's historiography to that of Greece and Mesopotamia
		2) Constant revision of the national history: Where to draw a line for inspiration?
Definition	History : Records of the past that celebrate the deeds of public figures and events of common interest.	
	Myth : A traditional story in which the gods are primary actors, acting outside of time , offers explanation for why things are.	
History & myth	<p>Compatible in ancient historiography. Historicization of myth (ex. Memphite Theology) and mythologization of history were done to explain etiological problems of people, nation, and customs using genealogies in Genesis.</p> <p>Propagandistic & etiological.</p>	<p>1) Historicity and faith are to be kept together. How do we know when the ancient historian was making distinction between "history" and "legend?"</p>
		<p>2) Is Bible distinctive? Parallelomania. Doctrine of special revelation is in danger. The production of Scripture is reduced to merely a human process. Van Seters assumes a direct borrowing on the part of the Yahwist.</p>
His approach on historiography	Genesis is not "historical" in modern sense . The historian created the vulgate tradition , some by using legend, folklore, and mythic	1) The patriarchal narratives are considered more or less imaginative literary creations of a much later date without appreciable stream of oral tradition behind them and without real historiographical intention of historical worth .

& Historicity of Biblical accounts	elements that were available in his contemporary world, but some by creating in the manner of contemporary historiography in Greece .	2) Study of history of transmission is very speculative. 3) Genesis and Greek literature: Not really parallel. Occasional similarities do not imply direct borrowing. Israelite literature is more about the deity than about the heroes or the people; much less propagandistic ; view of divine sovereignty being different from ANE mythological view of the gods' involvement in history.
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