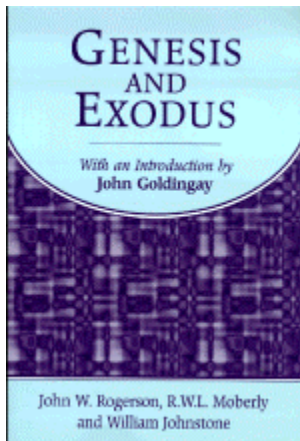


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Rogerson, John W., R.W.L. Moberly, and William Johnstone

Genesis and Exodus

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001. Pp. 289,
Paperback, No Price Available, ISBN 1841271918.
Introduction by John Goldingay

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In this volume three earlier and once separate *JSOT* OT Guides are reprinted as one. This new larger format includes works originally written in 1991 (Rogerson, *Genesis 1-11*) and 1992 (Moberly, *Genesis 12-50*) and 1990 (Johnstone, *Exodus*), all of which received positive reviews when they first appeared. The wealth of scholarly material published together here has a common thread: each commentator explores diverse methodological perspectives on his respective texts, and each makes the point that the interpretive context of the reader directly affects how the text is understood. Further, each provides a thorough history of interpretation of critical research up until the date of its original publication and each addresses the historicity of the events portrayed in the biblical texts, while avoiding definitive attempts to reconstruct ancient Israelite history based on scholarly analyses.

In Part I, Rogerson provides the reader with a comprehensive introduction to the ancient Near Eastern background of Genesis 1-11, as well as to scholarly approaches to biblical primeval history that were current at the time of his writing. These interpretive methods include literary-critical, liberation and feminist readings. Although he avoids any final conclusions regarding the dating of the material or what it might have meant to its ancient authors and audiences, Rogerson recognizes that the power of these texts, for ancient and modern interpreters alike, lies in their engagement with the fundamental existential question of what it means to be human.

Moberly's contribution on Genesis 12-50 in Part II is wide-ranging in its survey of methodological approaches to the text. His review covers all of the content of the ancestral narratives, but he ultimately focuses on Genesis 22 as a prism for showcasing readings and analyses ranging from Rashi to von Rad. In the course of such a survey,

Moberly ponders who wrote Genesis, how, when and why they did so and considers scholars whose contribution to answering these questions cannot be ignored, i.e., Wellhausen, Alt, Albright and van Seters.

Part III, Johnstone's contribution on Exodus, covers the historical, institutional, literary and theological issues of scholarly analysis. Johnstone provides an overview of these multiple perspectives by scrutinizing specific topics in Exodus, namely, the feasts of Passover and unleavened bread, the offering of the first-born and the firstfruits, theophany, covenant and law. Throughout his review of interpretations, Johnstone emphasizes that the Exodus texts are not to be viewed as historical sources about ancient events but are the means by which ancient Israel expressed her theological understanding of Yahweh's involvement in her history. Thus, for Johnstone, Exodus is a source of religious truth, but cannot be used to write historiography.

For purposes of this new expanded format, the three separate earlier commentaries OT Guides have been unevenly updated; moreover, they have not been edited for consistency, resulting in an imbalance in the present volume. For example, Rogerson refers to the documentary hypothesis in his discussion of Genesis 1-11, but it is only in Moberly's section on Genesis 12-50 that this theory is explained. Then Johnstone, who provides the most up-to-date discussion of the state of critical scholarly interpretation in his commentary on Exodus, introduces the difference between the "new documentary hypothesis" with its concern for redactional issues (arguing for a double redaction based on an earlier D-version and a later P-edition), and "old-fashioned literary criticism," (250-51). For the reader to make sense of the relationship between these three discussions, it is necessary to have prior knowledge of critical biblical scholarship—although the volume claims to be an introduction to Genesis and Exodus. Thus, the book will best serve those readers with prior training on higher biblical criticism.

Although each survey of scholarly research is detailed, and includes bibliography, only the sections by Johnstone and Moberly include bibliographical references since their original commentaries first appeared; the bibliography provided by Moberly is annotated. Those abreast of critical analysis will regret that the discussion of feminist and social scientific issues concerning Genesis and Exodus have not been updated to take account of developments in the past decade

The introduction to the present volume, by John Goldingay, likens reading this three-part book to watching a mini-series on television or in film, maintaining that God is one of the central characters who appear in all three parts of the series. The problem, though, is that with no attempt to edit these three parts together for consistency, the analysis of each section does not develop the story line from the prior "episode." By the time one gets through reading the three parts of this book, due to the vast differences between them, the synthesis provided by Goldingay's introduction is lost.

It should be noted that the introduction, as well as the first two parts of this book, concerning Genesis, are distinctly Christian in their doctrinal tone. The book will appeal most to those who share Moberly's perspective, as he relates the continuities and discontinuities between ancestral religion in Genesis to Yahwism in later traditions, that

the content of Genesis 12-50 stands in relationship to the rest of the Hebrew Bible in the same way that “the Old Testament stands in relation to the New Testament” (121). The back cover of this book indicates that the new format of larger sections of biblical content in one volume facilitates study of the biblical text by seminary and college students. However, I would not recommend this book to my students. In this case, the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts.