

[MJTM 19 (2017–2018)]

#### BOOK REVIEW

Alistair J. Roberts and Andrew Wilson. *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing Themes of Redemption through Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. 176 pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1433557989. \$17.99.

In this work, Alistair J. Roberts and Andrew Wilson combine their scholarly expertise and pastoral concern for the church to better understand the meaning and significance of the Exodus—the account of God leading his chosen people out of slavery in Egypt—throughout God’s Word, including the New Testament. According to the authors, this volume arose out of the conviction that a greater understanding of the unity of Scripture, “especially when it comes to the theme of redemption from slavery” (14), can help to strengthen and ground the evangelical church in this century. To be clear, *Echoes of Exodus* is “about the exodus theme in the Bible” and was explicitly written “to help people make more sense of Scripture, more sense of the gospel, and more sense of the Christian life” (17). In brief, Roberts and Wilson seek to show how “the exodus is more than a past event; it is a paradigm that shapes the storyline of the Bible and the life of the believer” (1) and they contend that “the exodus is central to the Scriptures, central to the gospel, and central to the Christian life” (13).

Throughout the book, the authors emphasize that “metaphors matter” (22), comparing the act of reading Scripture to listening to jazz music or attending a symphony, because in the Bible, much like in a symphony, all of the notes (even the seemingly discordant ones) are important as they work together to contribute to the whole. Roberts and Wilson also assert that within the “symphony of scripture” there is a common tune or melody—namely, that of the Exodus, which continually recurs until it reaches its crescendo in Jesus. In brief, the authors state that

viewing Scripture as jazz/symphonic music involves “the language of tension and resolution,” the “relationship between melody and harmony,” and “the interplay between rhythm and meter” (24). This allows the reader to ask questions about the details of the harmony but not lose track of the melody, for there is “always a harmony within the word of God” (21). The Bible’s “meter” unfolds in days, weeks, months, and seasons, but the Bible’s “rhythm” is dominated by the “beats” of the Sabbath, Day of Atonement, Passover, and Pentecost, and these “beats” form patterns that repeatedly draw the audience’s attention to particular moments in the story. The authors further state: “Scriptural typology is more like a piece of music: familiar themes like temple, kingdom, exodus, judgment, and sacrifice keep recurring, but always slightly differently” (27).

Aside from a “General” and a “Scripture” index (as well as a short prelude), the book itself is arranged into four distinct sections called “movements,” each of which contain between four to seven chapters a piece. Each individual chapter is about the same total length of pages. For the most part, the chapters have very few references (roughly 1–4 footnotes per chapter). The volume is introduced with and concluded by a two-chapter “overture,” which outlines the musical approach to Scripture that the authors apply and briefly explains the importance of the Passover meal in both the Old and New Testaments, and a “coda” that encourages the reader to not only hear the Exodus story but to continue to participate in it through “celebrating the sacraments” of baptism and the Lord’s Supper (155).

Each of the book’s “movements” illustrate how various events that occurred in the Exodus are picked up or alluded to again and again throughout the biblical text, providing an Exodus-shaped paradigm with which people can understand salvation. Two of the larger events pertaining to Israel’s defining experience, which the book continues to highlight, are their rescue (by blood and through water) from oppression and their transfer from slave to familial status, with a promised inheritance. These two themes, as well as many others, are part of a wider and greater pattern of redemption that is echoed throughout all of Scripture.

The first movement, entitled “Out of the House of Slaves,” covers most of Exodus through Deuteronomy (and portions of the book of Joshua) and discusses Israel’s freedom from bondage in Egypt, highlighting the fact that Moses, their leader, had two exodus experiences himself, one at birth and another at age forty. Roberts and Wilson state that Moses’s life experiences were “foreshadowing Israel’s later rescue” (37). The second movement, “The Exodus in Genesis,” begins with the story of Noah and the flood waters: “just as God remembered Israel and led them to a mountain where he gave them a new covenant, new laws, and ultimately rest, so God remembers Noah (Gen 8:1) and brings him safely to a mountain, where he receives a new covenant, new laws, and a place of rest” (63). Later, the authors compare the life of Abraham (and the life of his extended family, as Jacob is also forced to go to a foreign land) to “looking at a row of Russian dolls of increasing size lined up next to each other. Not only do the dolls look similar, but they also fit inside each other, revealing an internal unity” (68).

The third movement, “The ReEchoing of Exodus,” covers the books of Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah–Malachi, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. This section highlights specific echoes of the Exodus, such as redemption, Pharaoh-like figures and shepherd leaders, and plague-like droughts and experiences on mountains. Roberts and Wilson claim that the prophets intentionally use Exodus imagery; they keep “calling Israel to remember the exodus—but not in nostalgia for a past golden age . . . but in hope for the future” (110). The prophets point Israel forward by pointing them back “to the exodus in particular” (110).

The fourth, and final, movement, entitled “The Great Deliverance,” covers the entire corpus of the New Testament (from Matthew to Revelation) and allows the reader to see more clearly how the “exodus tune” reaches its crescendo in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (129). The authors highlight how Jesus’s life and ministry “is an exodus, hidden in plain sight” (125). Jesus recapitulates Israel’s life in himself, except “Jesus succeeds where Israel failed” (127), namely in the wilderness wanderings (Isa 63:8–10; Luke 4:1–14). The various melodies (images) of the Exodus (including slavery to sin, water/baptism,

redemption through blood, and adoption) are also carried throughout Paul's letters, with the authors explicitly stating: "Paul's gospel is an exodus" (143). Lastly, the authors remind their readers that "the whole book of Revelation has an exodus shape to it" and that Revelation is "the exodus of everything" (149). This ending is fitting in that it reveals that the Bible is a "redemption story," i. e., "a cosmic exodus, stretching from Eden to the New Jerusalem" (155).

*Echoes of Exodus* is highly engaging from a conceptual perspective and clearly written, being pitched at a level that is popular enough so as not to drown readers in a sea of redemption themes (although some uninitiated readers may yet feel overwhelmed) but still academically responsible enough to perhaps be used as a supplementary textbook within the classroom. The provision of three personal and three group discussion questions at the end of each chapter makes accommodating the volume to a group Bible study quite easy and is a boon for busy ministers, church leaders, and teachers. The aerial view of the overarching Exodus theme from a biblical theology perspective is also most appreciated, as is the canonical focus.

The text's major downfall is the lack of footnotes and its inadequate references to key resources. Although *Echoes of Exodus* does contain a "notes" section, it is insufficient for the needs of academia and the student who wishes to delve deeper into the various connections and/or parallels that the authors make. Regrettably, *Echoes of Exodus* also consistently fails to provide arguments that are robust enough (in this reviewer's opinion) to rebut any countering viewpoints. That is to say, many of the connections that are suggested will not likely hold up under serious scrutiny. For example, the suggestion that Saul in 1 Kings is a "new Pharaoh type" hardly seems plausible (95), nor does the idea that the ark was captured by the Philistines actually exemplify the fact that God made an exodus for the nation as a whole (89–90). Though Roberts and Wilson, in the first endnote in the "Prelude," insist that "the proof of the pudding will have to be in the eating," (160), in these cases (and some others that could also be cited) such "proof" is still found wanting.

That being said, however, *Echoes of Exodus* does effectively

achieve its desired goal of highlighting the theme of the Exodus and urging Christians to not only understand it in a biblical way, but also to apply it to their lives. Its primary audience will likely be students of Christian universities, Bible colleges, and seminaries, and both leadership and laity within the church.

William P. Whyte  
McMaster Divinity College  
Hamilton, ON