

Preliminary questions on Genesis

Some fundamental ideas to be pursued are:

1. First of all, that the text of Genesis, and the stories therein, are the product of groups that have a history within a state, and not *ab origine* as non-state people (tribal, primitive, etc.), preceding a law-giving state figured by the story of Exodus and Sinai, itself putatively followed by an incipient state “described” in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings (Why the echo in Chronicles?).
2. Before we discuss the particular arguments leading one to believe that Genesis as we have it is a later text (which doesn’t mean it doesn’t incorporate older materials, but the extent of the shaping of these materials is the important question), it would be important to reflect and develop a theoretical view of the role of religion in human development, as well as the role of politics, and especially the state.
3. For this, one can learn from theories of “la pensée sauvage” and the birth of state, as theorized in Lévi-Strauss 1954, Clastres 1974, and especially Gauchet 1985, and Gauchet 2005. That is: one needs to formulate concepts of what characteristics religion has in pre-state societies, and what forms it is given when specialized, separate agencies take hold of religious representations (and if anything harden them though they introduce an element of “incarnation” or muddle of the radical otherness of religious figures and myths).
4. Even though this inquiry seem far from the initial question (Genesis story within the Bible), it would be beneficial to pursue this theoretical question further, into the modern period—meaning by this the developments since the XVth c. in Christianized Europe. Main feature or development of this period: the realization (and acting upon it) that human development can (and must?) take place aside or without religion (at a minimum).

5. This theoretical remapping, arguably, would be helpful in properly situating the intellectual developments concerning the Bible. Namely, one may have a better grip about what is at stake in the use of archaeology and textual discoveries when trying to mount arguments about the evolution of biblical “thought” and writing.
6. An example of wrong development—useful for its comparative value—is the view of W.F. Albright, one of the most powerful expositors of an evolutionary scheme that mimicks the biblical story. See his *From the Stone Age to Christianity* and a painfully long criticism of his conservative anthropology in Long 1997. Give other examples (Rainey? and the modern preachy figure, William G. Dever 2003, as well as William G Dever 2001.)
7. One may then begin to ask more precise questions regarding the history of ancient Israel / Judah, together with developing a more plausible view of the development of biblical literature, including its reputedly older “strata”.

References

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