

Michael S. Moore. *Faith under Pressure: A Study of Biblical Leaders in Conflict*. Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood, 2003. Pp. 360. ISBN 0-9714289-1-3. \$19.95 paper.

Michael S. Moore, Associate Director of Fuller Theological Seminary South-west (Phoenix), Old Testament professor, author, and preaching minister, has written this book "first and foremost . . . for believers . . . to encourage believers and help them grow in the Faith" (p. 16). He also specifically targets seminary students, not many of whom he sees embracing full-time work in the Church as a viable calling, and too many of whom he feels have "an overly naïve view" of vocation. Thus he is concerned "to help them understand the struggles of the believers who've gone before them" and to "catch a passion for helping others grow in the Faith" (p. 17).

The stories of past believers on which Moore focuses are those chronicled in the books of 1 and 2 Kings. His thesis is that these books constitute "a carefully-designed anthology in which the individual episodes parallel, reflect, and shape one another in order to formulate more explicitly the narrator's theological concerns" (p. 18). One of the most important theological themes of this corpus, he says, is "how to keep the faith under pressure" (p. 25)—hence the title of his book.

Moore's book is structured on the basis of various trajectories that he charts in Kings relating to the kinds of pressure that he suggests are depicted there, that is, the pressures of injustice, subversion, prophecy, famine, frailty, foreigners, Yahweh, reform, and violence. He advocates a holistic reading/interpretive strategy that takes into account both historical and literary aspects of texts, a strategy that he himself adopts. For each passage that he analyzes, his approach is both intratextual, involving comparisons of narratives within the same biblical book, and intertextual, featuring narrative comparisons between biblical and even nonbiblical books (p. 19). He maintains that "[i]ntratextual approaches . . . can make us more aware of Kings' intricate structure and awesome spiritual potential. By allowing these stories to interpret themselves, we can aim them more intentionally at struggling believers—not just professional scholars" (p. 25).

What Moore sets out to accomplish in this book is precisely the kind of thing that one wishes more professional biblical scholars would undertake. The Church needs up-to-date and hermeneutically sound resources for the interpretation of Scripture and the application of its message, resources that do not presuppose expertise in biblical languages but that are not "dumbed down" either. Moore's strategy of approaching biblical passages holistically, alerting readers to thematic links among pericopes, working through the theological implications of such textual units, and drawing on the wealth of his own pastoral experience in providing context for suggested applications, is entirely appropriate for a volume like this. Readers will no doubt find various insights of his into the meaning and significance of the stories in Kings quite enlightening. Yet, though his overall approach is sound, some of his observations and conclusions are questionable and even rather puzzling. Examples of the latter sort are given below.

1. Certain intratextual and intertextual links that Moore proposes seem forced. For instance, the suggested intratextual connection involving the Hebrew word *yādaʿ* that Moore claims (p. 144) ties the reference concerning Elisha's ignorance of the Shunammite woman's distress (2 Kgs 4:27) to the reference regarding the lack of knowledge about a noxious plant that has been put into a pot of stew (4:39) does not in fact exist, because in the former verse *yādaʿ* is not employed. What Elisha actually says is that Yahweh has hidden (*Hiphil* of *'ālam*) the matter from him and not told (*Hiphil* of *nāgad*) him. In another context, the supposed intertextual connection that is implied in Moore's assertion "in many ways Christ's crucifixion profoundly parallels Samaria's destruction" (p. 212) does not strike one as obvious. In any event, Moore does not develop this idea or even comment any further on it.

2. Moore sometimes seems to miss the biblical author's point in his interpretation of a pericope. One does wonder, for example, how he comes to the conclusion that "[e]nticement is God's last, desperate act of grace for the Ahabs of this world" based on the story in 1 Kgs 22 in which Yahweh develops a plan to lure Ahab into the battle that will result in the Israelite king's death (p. 130). Surely this is a case of Yahweh's judgment of Ahab rather than of his grace toward him.

3. Moore's comments in the "Theological Reflection" sections associated with the pericopes that he analyzes at times feature rather tenuous connections with the biblical text. Thus Moore's link between Baal worshippers on Mt. Carmel and a woman in his church named Joan who is troubled by what appears to be a worship leader's self-absorbed disregard for the congregation's unfamiliarity with new songs (p. 96) does not ring true. Joan's fault is identified as inflexibility, but it seems unlikely that this is the nub of the issue for Elijah in his controversy with apostate Israelites.

Likewise, one does not know quite what to make of Moore's association of the salt that Elisha uses to purify Jericho's water supply (2 Kgs 2:18–22) and the flour he employs to neutralize the poison in the above-mentioned stew (2 Kgs 4:38–41) with the Holy Spirit. Moore says that "[t]he job of the Spirit is to take inedible food and undrinkable water and transform them into nutrients for the Body." But then he appears to mix or even change metaphors in the applications he makes to both the educational curriculum and the situation of a disruptive church member who is "a 'wild vine' in our congregational stew" (pp. 146–47). It might be conceded that providing healthy nutrients for the body to consume is analogous to vetting instructional materials for a student's use, but exactly how is it analogous to the disciplining of a troublemaker?

A stylistic matter that warrants some comment is the unorthodox and inconsistent transliteration of Hebrew terms. Recurring problems include the failure to distinguish short, long, and unchangeably long vowels, as well as certain sibilants and gutturals; the failure to represent some letters; and the use of incorrect forms in certain contexts. The examples shown in the table on p. 185 are representative

Occasional informational errors are the result of inadvertent omissions. The oversight in the following excerpt occurs when two separate stories are linked: "In 1 Kings 3:16–28 . . . two prostitutes come to Solomon for help. Each claims the same child as her own, but each disputes with the king over who is

Page No.	Hebrew	Moore's Equivalent	Conventional Equivalent
33	לב שמע	<i>lêb shômê'a</i>	<i>lêb šômê'a</i>
73	לב נטה	<i>leb natâ</i>	<i>lêb nâṭâ</i>
40	רצח	<i>ratsah</i>	<i>rāṣaḥ</i>
41	חטה	<i>hattâ</i>	<i>ḥaṭṭâ?</i>
73	נשים שרות	<i>nasim sarôt</i>	<i>nāšim sārôt</i>
73	סור	<i>tsûr</i>	<i>sûr</i>
41	ישתחנה	<i>yishtahû</i>	<i>yishtahāweh</i> (singular subject)

going to cook and eat the remaining child" (p. 148). Cannibalism is not, in fact, part of this story from Solomon's reign but is described in the account concerning the siege and famine recorded in 2 Kgs 6:24–7:20. While commenting on another story, Moore asserts that "Ahijah promises Jeroboam only 'one tribe' in 1 Kings 11:31–36" (p. 106 n. 87) but fails to mention Rehoboam—the one to whom a single tribe is promised—and the prediction that Jeroboam will rule ten tribes.

Among the very few spelling errors that have escaped detection are the following: "go into them" (p. 73) instead of "go in to them," that is, the Hebrew expression for entering into marriage; "Pharoah" (p. 120) instead of "Pharaoh"; "a yawing canyon" (p. 213) instead of "a yawning canyon."

An unfortunate production error involving the book's indexes has resulted in a situation in which all page references are four numbers too high.

Taking all of the above into consideration, one might say that Moore has authored a book that shows great promise at the outset but turns out to be something of a mixed blessing. His intentions and general methodological approach are good, some of his interpretations and applications are sound, and he writes interestingly. Yet in certain cases, he needs to work through the interpretive implications of the stories in Kings more carefully.

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