

MICHAEL S. MOORE, *The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development* (SBLDS 113; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990). Pp. xii + 157. Cloth \$23.95; paper \$15.95.

Although the literary artistry of Numbers 22–24 has been widely recognized, debate concerning the character and development of the Balaam traditions continues. In the past, source-critical methodologies have dominated scholarly attempts to explain conflicting biblical portrayals of Balaam that range from that of “blind seer” (Num 22:22–30) to one of Yahweh’s most obedient servants (the rest of Numbers 22–24). In some respects the Balaam tradition as depicted in the Tell Deir Alla texts (discovered in 1967) has only added to the cloud of mystery surrounding this ancient prophet-magician.

Moore has attempted to move beyond this impasse by investigating the biblical and extrabiblical Balaam traditions from a phenomenological perspective. Insights and perspectives drawn from contemporary role theory provide M. with an integrated theoretical matrix for his investigations. Of primary importance in this regard are the variables of role enactment, role expectations, and intrarole conflict.

The book is well structured. M. begins by providing a good summary of previous research on the Balaam traditions both in the Bible and in the Deir Alla texts. He emphasizes the failure of the overly simplistic “negative-vs.-positive” bipolar framework, inherited from earlier source-critical analysis, to account for the striking variety encountered in the various portrayals of Balaam and suggests that utilization of contemporary role theory may broaden the investigation to the wider ancient Near Eastern context.

Chapter 1, “The Roles Enacted by Selected Ancient Near Eastern Magico-Religious Specialists,” provides fairly detailed descriptions of roles enacted in Anatolia (“old woman,” “augur”), Mesopotamia (“exorcist,” “diviner/seer”), and Syria-Palestine (“diviners,” “seers,” and “exorcists”). These roles fall in various places on a broad magic-religion continuum. Whereas these roles are quite distinct in Mesopotamia, with minimal role overlap and role conflict, Anatolian and Syro-Palestinian magico-religious specialists “are not as neatly separated into distinct societal categories” (p. 65).

Chapters 2 and 3, “The Roles Enacted by Balaam Bar Beor at Deir Alla” and “The Roles Enacted by Balaam Ben Beor in the Bible,” attempt “to examine the written evidence presently available about Balaam son of Beor and extrapolate from this evidence his primary roles” (p. 110). With regard to the Deir Alla materials, Balaam appears to have enacted a rather broad range of roles, equally balanced between the role-sets of “diviner/seer” and “exorcist.” This role overlap is also observable in the biblical materials, suggesting that Balaam was a more complex figure than previously thought, enacting a plurality of roles.

Chapter 4, “The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development,” reexamines the roles discerned in chaps. 2 and 3 in the light of those enacted by the magico-religious specialists of the ancient Near East, this time from a perspective gained from the three role theory variables: role enactment, role expectations, and intrarole conflict. M.’s thesis is that “any significant divergence in these traditions from the phenomenological *realia* represented in chap. 1 indicates a measurable level

of development" (p. 110). The Balaam traditions are remarkably congruent with the Anatolian and Syro-Palestinian evidence, presenting a Balaam who enacts a number of complementary and overlapping roles. As M. rightly states, this is the most fundamental discovery of the study. The repeated clashes between Balaam and Balak in the narrative are best understood as emerging from their fundamentally different expectations regarding Balaam's role. As Israel's tradents worked over the Balaam materials their view of where Balaam belonged on the magico-religious continuum shifted away from the magic pole towards the religious in an attempt to simplify the intrarole conflict inherent in the tradition.

By drawing attention to the wider phenomenological ancient Near Eastern context and demonstrating the positive methodological value of contemporary role theory, M. has significantly advanced the discussion of the character and development of the Balaam traditions and opened up new areas for investigation, especially the relationship between the Balaam traditions and later Jewish apocalyptic which are both structured around the visions of "seers" (p. 123). The discussion of these issues will surely continue, more productively, thanks to M.'s solid and suggestive work.

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ALVIERO NICCACCI, O.F.M., *Un profeta tra oppressori e oppressi: Analisi esegetica del capitolo 2 di Michea nel piano generale del libro* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Analecta 27; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing, 1989). Pp. xi + 211. Paper N.P.

Niccacci's monograph offers a detailed study of Micah 2. He begins with a philological analysis of the biblical text. He completes a synchronic reading of the text and allows this reading to control his additional investigations of this passage. The distinctive feature of this monograph is N.'s preference for a synchronic reading. He argues in favor of the unity of the chapter and its thematic connections with the rest of the book. In particular, he defends his attribution of Mic 2:12-13 to Micah and claims that the eighth-century prophet was capable of speaking both words of condemnation and promises of salvation. A characteristic element in the structure of the Book of Micah is the alternation of condemnation and promises of salvation in the history of Israel. Both condemnation and promise are present in Micah 2. The theme of condemnation is developed in chap. 3; that of promise, in chaps. 4-5.

Niccacci gives sustained attention to each section of Micah 2 (vv 1-5, 6-11, and 12-13) and draws the reader's attention to the literary qualities of the text. In the course of describing each section, he draws out the theological consequences of his analysis of the text. N. discusses Micah's consciousness of the prophetic task, his dispute with false prophets, the pedagogical purpose of prophetic judgment sayings, and Micah's theological vision and eschatological perspective.



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