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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *WealthWatch: A Study of Socioeconomic Conflict in the Bible* by Michael S. Moore

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Source: *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 64, Fasc. 2 (2014), p. 347

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43894152>

Accessed: 16-11-2019 18:46 UTC

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Michael S. MOORE, *Wealth Watch: A Study of Socioeconomic Conflict in the Bible*. xv + 304 pp. Pickwick Publications, Eugene, OR, 2011. Moore writes with conviction against simplistic and self-justifying messages from the Bible about the use and abuse of wealth in favour of an approach which grounds the narratives first in their ancient context. This is determined by a lengthy (and sometimes unnecessarily discursive) tracing of what he calls the “big problem” of socioeconomic conflict motifs in Gilgamesh, Atrahasis, and Erra. From this he moves to lively analyses of comparable narratives in the Pentateuch (starting with Cain and Abel, where there seem to me to be some exegetical liberties), in “early Jewish Texts” (e.g. Maccabees), and in the parables in Luke’s Gospel. A brief conclusion then finds some modern analogies (quite how is not explained) in corruption, bribery, slavery, and addiction. Moore is well-informed and yet manages to write for a non-scholarly readership with a generally engaging style. What remains unclear, however, is what we are supposed to do about it, so that his work may not achieve the degree of impact that he surely desires.

[H.G.M. Williamson]

Alissa Jones NELSON, *Power and Responsibility in Biblical Interpretation: Reading the Book of Job with Edward Said*. BibleWorld. x + 259 pp. Equinox, Sheffield & Bristol, CT, 2012. The author’s object is to enable a dialogue between two broad types of biblical interpretation that, following R. S. Sugirtharajah, she terms “academic” and “vernacular”, and that she considers have up to now been kept too far apart, with only subsidiary attention being paid to the latter in university curricula. The basic distinction between the two is that “academic” interpretations are “idea-primary” and maintain an ideal of objectivity, and “vernacular” ones are “experience-primary” and embrace the subjectivity of the interpreter. The terminology is not entirely happy, in that many of the “vernacular” interpretations that make it into print, such as those of G. Gutiérrez, are at home in the academic arena and make use of the scholarly apparatus, while conversely some of the interpretations classified here as “academic” make no effort to view the text objectively. The method she adopts is suggested by her reading of E. Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, which brings together works from the imperial centres and the “periphery” in a process he calls “contrapuntal reading”, letting the works sing in their own voices either in harmony or in dissonance, or, to drop the metaphor, to explore their similarities as well as their differences. Part I of the book, about half of it, is taken up with explaining the situation and the method, and exploring Said’s work and some contemporary efforts at integrating the two types of interpretation. The meat of the book is in the second part, which consists of three chapters. The first addresses the issue of suffering in the book of Job, comparing the interpretations of G. von Rad and G. Gutiérrez, with others in subsidiary roles. The second looks at some psychological interpretations of Job (D. Merkur, C. Jung and others) alongside work on the book with HIV-positive people in South Africa, largely mediated by G. O. West.