

*Untypische Texte im Matthäusevangelium? Studien zu Charakter, Funktion und Bedeutung einer Textgruppe des matthäischen Sonderguts*, by Dagmar J. Paul. Neutestamentliche Anhandlungen NS 50. Münster: Aschendorff, 2005. Pp. viii + 364. Paper. €49.00. ISBN 3402047985.

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Even though studies about Matthew's Gospel abound, its special material has been given little study recently. In her 2004 dissertation at the Technische Universität Dresden, Paul sets out to remedy this situation at least with regard to some of the narrative material unique to the Gospel. Her guiding questions are how the special material is integrated into the Gospel's literary design, whether the special material has within this design a specific function, and whether there are theological consequences for the interpretation of the Gospel. With these questions in mind, Paul acknowledges that her work is indebted to the redaction-critical method. She presupposes the Two Source hypothesis and defines the special material as being transmitted only by Matthew and not by the other canonical Gospels.

The introduction contains the overall question of the study and the rationale for the selection of texts. The texts Paul selects are all narrative in character and share an element of legend or folklore that connects them with apocryphal literature (3–4). In the infancy narrative Paul selects the birth of Jesus (1:18–25), the story of the magi (2:1–12), the flight to and the return from Egypt (2:13–15, 19–23), and the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem (2:16–18). From the stories concerning Peter she selects Peter's walk on the water (14:28–31) and the temple tax pericope (17:24–27). From the passion narrative Paul selects the end of Judas (27:3–10), the dream of Pilate's wife (27:19), Pilate and the call of all the people (27:24–25), the signs at the death of Jesus (27:51b–53), and the story of the guards at the tomb (27:62–66, 28:2–4, 11–15). A brief survey of previous studies of the special Matthean material then precedes the general plan of her study.

The main work of the study is divided into three parts. The first of these offers an individual analysis of the selected pericopae. Each analysis offers first Paul's own translation of the text, followed by a synchronous interpretation and a section asking whether the text offers hints as to whether it was developed in a tradition or was a creation of the author. The final interpretation tries to draw the connections between the literary design and its theological implication. Each analysis is completed by a summary.

In general the analyses are sound, reflecting her position that Matthew sees the separation of Israel and his community as final. Occasionally some oddities stand out. Thus Paul states that the infancy narratives in general, and 1:18–25 in particular, exhibit numerous significant details that are characteristic of Matthew. She then goes on to say that this proves that the final redactor took this text from oral tradition, redesigned it, and put it into writing (26). This is a large hypothesis to be hung on the Matthean characteristics. Furthermore, sometimes her translation does not support her analysis. When translating the pericope of the cry of all the people, Paul makes no difference between *ochlos* in 27:24 and *laos* in 27:25 (88). However, in her interpretation of the passage she gives precisely this differentiation a good deal of weight (92–93). Occasionally her interpretations can be hazy. Again in the interpretation of the call of all the people, she quotes Koch (VT 12 [1962]: 400) without further explanation. So what precisely is a “schicksalswirkende Tatsphäre ... eine dingliche, raumerfüllende Substanz,” and how does it relate to those asking for the blood of Jesus?

In the second part Paul studies the motifs that guided her selection of texts in their contexts in antiquity and in apocryphal literature. First she traces dreams, magi, cosmic signs, persecution of a child, walking on water, miraculous finds of fish, death of the evildoer, washing of hands as proclamation of innocence, guarding of tombs, and theft of corpses in the literature of antiquity. Some motifs occur in Hellenistic literature, others are more plausibly explained by parallels from Jewish tradition, and again others reflect a Greco-Roman influence. All of them occur in the context of folk religion; particularly significant in this context are dreams and the belief in stars and supernatural signs. Furthermore, these motifs are usually connected with the beginning or the end of a person's life. Matthew's contribution to this field of traditional legends and folklore is the rather sober narration and their often unusual function within the narrative. For example, the temple tax pericope does not show the unchangeability of fate or the reward of a just person but serves as an unconventional solution to a rather common problem (178). Paul concludes that these elements, though soberly narrated in the Gospel, still serve the demand for popular entertainment as a side benefit.

Paul then moves on to look at how these popular motifs are taken up and developed in subsequent apocryphal Gospels. She looks at the infancy Gospels of James and others, at the traditions surrounding Peter, and at passion narratives in the Gospels of Peter and Nicodemus and in the literature connected with Pilate. While the Matthean infancy and passion motifs clearly influenced later literature, the Petrine narratives were not taken up to any significant amount. In another strand of argument Paul suggests that there are shared interests between Matthew and the apocryphal Gospels in their interest to fill gaps in the narrative, to flesh out minor characters in the narrative, and to amplify miraculous and legendary elements.

The third part moves on to place the results of the previous parts into the context of the whole Gospel. In terms of literary design, Paul shows how the special material integrates into the overall narrative of the Gospel. She pays particular

attention to the groups with whom Jesus is portrayed as being in conflict but also to other groups that appear in the Gospel narrative. Her purpose here is to show how the story of Jesus is the story of God, marred by conflict and designed to be transparent to the actual reader. In terms of theological design, Paul offers comments on the fulfillment quotations, on Christology, on the people of God, and on discipleship. Obviously there is some repetition when Paul relates the literary analysis to theological themes. However, the emphasis shifts when Paul shows how the rejection of Israel by the Baptist and Jesus becomes narrative theology through the special material in the passion, to name but one example. In this part it becomes clear that for Paul the special material in Matthew needs to be seen against the background of a very specific situation of a community that has separated from Judaism and denounces the Jewish rejection of Jesus and a rejection of God.

Paul ends her volume with a conclusion that not only offers a summary but also some thoughts on further study, among them the hint that literary and theological studies alone are probably insufficient to place the material in a specific historic situation. She suggests that such observations could be augmented by sociological and historical studies. The volume concludes with a bibliography, a partial index of biblical and ancient quotations, but no index of authors. In the end, the question of the title is answered in the negative: the Matthean special material is not atypical of the Gospel but fits neatly within its overall design.

This book is valuable for several reasons. It is good to see a study of Matthew's special material, particularly one that places some of the material in the wider literary context of antiquity and early Christianity. Paul's selection of just the narrative material in Matthew is a good decision in terms of keeping the volume to a still readable length. Her conclusions are usually based on a close reading of the texts, even though her firm assertion of the rejection of Israel is a matter of controversy. Her knowledge of secondary literature, particularly in German, is commendable, even though her knowledge of English works has some significant gaps. The strength of the work lies in the first part and in the close examination of the individual texts.

Having said this, some quibbles remain. Paul fails to lay out her particular question and reason for writing this book in narrow enough terms. Her interests are in the narrative and theological design of Matthew, in the legendary character of some of the texts, in providing a background in ancient literature, and in tracing the development of the material in later Christian texts. It would have been a service to readers had she been able to focus properly on any one of these topics. Granted that they are interrelated, I still found part 2 standing beside rather than leading up to part 3. Paul readily jumps from her conclusions about literary and theological design toward the reconstruction of a community behind the Gospel with breathtaking speed. This is particularly unsatisfactory because here in particular her gaps in the reception of recent English works are apparent. For example, in her interpretation of the cry of all the people she should engage some of the literature of a different viewpoint.

This book will probably not be the last word on Matthew's special material, but one should be grateful to Paul for bringing these parts of Matthew back to scholarly discourse and for her suggestive readings of it in the context of the literature of antiquity.

