

Nicholas G. Piotrowski, *Matthew's New David at the End of Exile. A Socio-Rhetorical Study of Scriptural Quotations* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 170; Leiden – Boston, Brill 2016). Pp. 316. €125. ISBN 978-90-04-32678-1 (hardback). ISBN 978-90-04-32688-0 (e-book)

### JACEK PIETRZAK OP

Institute of Biblical Studies, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin  
e-mail: jacek.pietrzak@dominikanie.pl

Nicholas G. Piotrowski serves as Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Crossroads Bible College in Indianapolis. This book is the revised and expanded version of his PhD dissertation, which he earned in 2013 at Wheaton College. His research concern “fulfilment quotations” in the gospel of Matthew, which he prefers to call “formula quotations”. According to his methodology these are citations from the Scripture introduced by the formula containing three components: the verb πληρωθῆναι, phrase διὰ τοῦ προφήτου or διὰ τῶν προφητῶν, and an aorist passive participial form of λέγω. He points out, however, that he does not stick to these criteria in a strict way and that they occur „mostly together, but not always”. Throughout the gospel the author finds thirteen such quotes (1:22-23; 2:5-6; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 3:3; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:14-15; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10). The starting point is the observation that seven of them, which is more than a half, come from the prologue of the gospel, which, according to the author finishes in w 4:16. Probably, it would be easier to say that this is the first part of the gospel, up to words: „Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς...” (4:17), as the issue of prologue’s borders is debatable (p. 31-32).

This work focuses primarily on context study. Piotrowski examines not only the evangelical context in which the “formula quotations” appear, but also takes into account the contexts of the Scripture from which they were drawn. As a result of the intertextual conversation between these two narrative worlds of the Old and the New Testament, deeper meaning of Matthew’s narrative is revealed. This method of approach to the gospel of Matthew is not only innovative, but brings a lot of research to date. In his “status questionis” Piotrowski shows that most of Christological and ecclesiological theses that have been set up so far are so general that they can be derived from many other scripture quotations. That is because “formula quotations” were regarded only as the support for Matthew’s theology from the external authority. The author seeks to prove that

they not only support this theology but also form it. Therefore, it is not enough to examine the very fact of their use, but it is necessary to examine their content, which means also the context they bring. This book gives answer to the question why Mathew used these rather than other quotations. The question is all the more justified, because most of them do not belong to the canon of messianic nor ecclesiological quotes.

Piotrowski uses the method, which he calls “socio-rhetorical”. The name is supposed to indicate that it is not just about the formal side of the text, but more about its message and impact on its audience. As Piotrowski observes in the preface: “it must have been ideologically powerfully when the first-century CE Jews read/heard their ancient scriptures in new contexts.” Therefore, when examining the theology of Matthew, the author also draws attention to the problem of self-identity of his community. The important question for him is: “how did that story shape Matthew’s first readers’ understanding of themselves and the world around them?” (p. 2). This question he answers in the final chapter, after examining the content of the prologue.

In fact, his method includes components of narrative analysis, Hebrew rhetoric, and two elements taken from Umberto Eco semiotics: “Model Reader” and “Cultural Encyclopedia.” These last two tools are very helpful. Model Reader is a competent reader whose existence is assumed by Matthew. This reader uses interpretative frames available in the “Cultural Encyclopedia” which is “the theoretical storehouse of a society’s knowledge” (p. 24). Piotrowski proves that the dominant frames selected by the prolog intertextual conversations are: “David” and “end-of-exile”. According to him, Matthew continues the suspended Old Testament metanarrative, which ends with the prolonged state of exile. The appearance of God’s promised son of David means that the time of exile is ending, and the time of renewal begins. Thus “New David at the End of Exile” is the hermeneutic key that guides the reader throughout the gospel.

The book consists of nine chapters. After the introductory chapter the author proceeds to examine the evangelical narrative and the contexts indicated by formula quotations. Each time it turns out that “David/end-of-exile” frame is selected and complemented with specific icons. At the end of each chapter the author shows how this frame, enriched by new elements functions in other gospel locations.

Contextual analysis is interrupted by the surprisingly placed chapter four, in which the author tests whether the frame David/end of exile is known to reader from other works. It comes out that in the literature of the Second Temple period the motif of ongoing exile occurs frequently, but only four texts combines it with Davidic language (Testament of Judah, 4 Ezra, Dead Sea Scrolls and Psalms of Solomon). However, there is no consistent theology linking David to the end of

exile. Such theology is found in the Old Testament, which is part of the “cultural encyclopedia” of that period. Hence, Piotrowski concludes that Matthew's idea is original against other works of the Second Temple, but at the same time is a continuation of the theology taken from the Old Testament (p. 111).

It is impossible to present here all aspects of the author's narrative analysis. This wealth of threads is an advantage and disadvantage of this study. The contexts evoked by the quotes overlap, and the author adds to this also the contexts induced by the narrative itself. This is the case, for example, in chapter three, in which the author examines Mt 2:1-12. There is a quote from Mi 5:1,3, but Piotrowski describing the new characters uses the context of the preceding quote (Isa 7:1-9:6) and adds to it the context of Isa 60:1-6. A reader who is far from the competence of Matthew's Model Reader must be very attentive in this reading.

In chapter two, Piotrowski examines Mt 1, which contains the quotation from Isa 7:14. He notes that at the very beginning of the gospel, in genealogy, Matthew shows special interest in David and in the exile which is the only mentioned event there. He claims, that Mathews idea was to emphasize that the exile continues, but the promises made to David will be fulfilled (p. 36). Indeed, at the beginning of the story, God promises to give a Davidic descendant who will “save his people from their sins” (1:21). This promise is immediately realized. Piotrowski shows that the broader context of Isa 7:1-9:6 contains an identical promise-fulfillment plot, which at the same time is a prophecy of a distant future (p. 52). Thus Mathew says that this prophecy of the restoration of David's house is just being fulfilled. Isaiah's context also explains that salvation does not apply exclusively to those belonging to the house of David, who call “God with us” (Isa 8:10), but in the future it will also concern the northern tribes, who separated from the house of David (Isa 8:23). Piotrowski shows that such an interpretative frame fits in well with the last verses of the gospel (28:18-20), where Jesus, as the New David, tells his disciples, “I am with you always” and commands them to “go and make disciples of all nations”.

In chapter three the author deals with Mt 2:1-12. The events that occur there form a chiasm structure, in the center of which is a quotation of Mi 5:1,3 concerning Bethlehem's origin of the eschatological David. According to Piotrowski, Matthew shows that there is no true temple in Jerusalem, because the worship is in Bethlehem. Likewise, true priests are not high priests of Jerusalem but wise men from the East. Also there is no true king in Jerusalem, and all city is troubled (2:3). These circumstances, he claims, indicate that Jerusalem is now the place of exile. The same says the evoked context from Micah (4:9-5:4a): the lack of the king (Mi 4:9), the exile to Babylon (4:10), the profanation of the temple (Mi 4:11). But at the same time this context let reader understand that there are also signs of renewal: the nations that besieged Jerusalem will now come and return

its riches (Mi 4:13), the leaders responsible for exile will be punished (Mi 4:14), the house of David will be restored (Mi 5:1), God will gather Israel (Mi 5:2), and will rule the nations (Mi 5:3) in peace (Mi 5:4a). (p. 82-83). Thus the interpretation frame is enriched with new images. Piotrowski shows that they can be applied in Mt 8:1-4, where Jesus commands the man healed from leper to show himself to the priests. He is to testify that Jesus is a new priest and a new temple. The healed leper himself can be also a metaphor of Israel's return from exile (p. 90).

In chapter five, the author analyzes another narrative chiasm, which contains two corresponding with each other quotes: Hos 11:1 and Jer 31:15. At the center of this structure are the actions of Herod, which emphasize the ongoing state of exile. Piotrowski claims that the redemptive-historical roles of Jerusalem and Egypt are inverted. Jerusalem is the place of exile, where Herod plays the role of Pharaoh whereas Jesus escapes to "Egypt", which in this context means a place of refuge (p. 119). According to him, here is a reference to the story of Moses, who fled from Pharaoh to the land of Madian and then returned to lead Israel out of captivity. Employed verses from Old Testament create expectations that Jesus will do the same, that is He will return from "Egypt" to Jerusalem in order to save his people. Contexts Hos 11:1 and Jer 31:15 enrich the interpretative framework with such themes as a return to the place of slavery, the need for the second exodus, or the forgiveness of sins. According to Piotrowski, these icons can only be found from Mt 16:21, when Jesus announces his return to Jerusalem, where a work of salvation will be accomplished.

In the following narrative the reader expects that Jesus will return to Jerusalem, but he goes to Nazareth. This topic Piotrowski examines in chapter six. City of Nazareth does not occur in the Old Testament. The evangelist points out that it is in Galilee, i.e. in the land of Gentiles. Piotrowski claims that Nazareth symbolizes the state of exile and that the name Ναζωραῖος has homophonic association with Hebrew *nēzer* ("shoot"/"branch"), which is found in Davidic context in Isa 11:1. Therefore to call Jesus the Ναζωραῖος is, according to him, a statement that the house of David arises from exile and enters the path of the second exodus (p. 162). The presence of this interpretative framework, the author observes, in Jesus solemn entrance to Jerusalem, where the crowds say that Jesus is "the son of David" and that he is "from Nazareth in Galilee" (21:8-13).

In chapter seven, the author deals with longer narrative (3:1–4:11), which begins with the activity of John the Baptist in the desert. Matthew interprets it with the verse of Isa 40:3 (3:3). According to Piotrowski this quote recalls the vast context of Isa 40–55, in which God says that the time of exile is over and the second exodus is about to begin. The first to go back is God Himself, calling for all nations to join Him (p. 187-188). In Matthew's narrative, Jesus is both God and Israel. Like Israel, during the first exodus, Jesus goes through the

waters (baptism) and goes to the desert and is called “Son”. But as God He will go first the way of the second exodus and will urge others to join Him, creating a new people of God at the end of exile. The first enlargement of Israel takes place immediately after the end of the prologue in 4:18-20, when Jesus is joined by the first disciples. Piotrowski points out that the same context of Isa 40–55 is evoked by two other “formula quotations” outside the prologue in 8:17 and 12:17-21. Also, the same frame is used and strengthened by Isa 6:9-10 in 13:9-17.

The final section of the prologue where Jesus leaves Nazareth and begins his public activity (4:12-16) is presented in chapter eight. Piotrowski observes that quotation of Isa 8:23–9:1 forms the inclusion with the first “formula quotation”, as it belongs to the same broader context (Isa 7:1–9:6). The evoked Isaiah narration tells about the coming of David’s descendant which marks the end of exile and is symbolically portrayed as the departure from darkness, the rejection of the bondage of slavery, and the return by the sea. Piotrowski claims that Matthew not only shows that the coming from the exile is started, but also answers the question from the beginning of the prologue: “Who are Jesus’s people”. After examining Mathew’s conversation with Isaiah he concludes that these are those “on whom the end-of-exile light (Jesus’ preaching) shines, and who in turn follow Jesus’ preaching” (p. 217). The use of the frame enriched by these elements is presented in chapter nine, where narrative of the Passion (26–28) is examined. Piotrowski observes that Jesus is dying in darkness quoting the Davidic psalm about his state of abandonment by God (27:45ff). In this scene he sees a clear indication of the state of exile that will be overcome by the morning of resurrection.

Carrying out this contextual analysis, the author makes significant conclusions. First of all, he discovers Matthew’s hermeneutic key. As shown in chapter one, it was not clear so far what rationale led the evangelist to select these quotes. Piotrowski shows that they all come from the contexts of David and/or the end of exile. Each quotation, however, describes these threads in their own way and thus enriches the hermeneutic key with new elements. In this way a subplot is created, which serves as a specific interpretative light for the whole gospel. The belief that the “formula quotations” in prologue are such light was already expressed by Luz. But Piotrowski explains how is this light effective (p. 12).

Determining the meaning of each quote in the Matthew narrative, Piotrowski provides also a satisfactory solution to many of the exegetical problems caused by noncontextual reading, such as: the mismatch of Hos 11:1 to the context of the gospel, unnecessary discussion on the location of Rachel’s grave in Ramah based on the quotation Jr 31:15, or the absence of the quoted Old Testament citation in Mt 2:23. Piotrowski proves that these and similar difficulties can be overcome when Matthew is seriously treated as a hermeneutist, not as the one who just simply extract quotations from their original contexts.

Showing the complexity of the evangelical composition, Piotrowski not only appreciates the author, but also the audience. He assumes that at least some of the members of the community to whom Matthew wrote his gospel must have been well versed in the Old Testament and knew the contexts from which the quotations came. Only with this assumption can one speak of the socio-rhetorical effect of Mathew's composition. According to Piotrowski, the gospel was supposed to support the self-identity of the church in relation to the metanarrative of the Old Testament and to Judaism. Indeed, the analysis of the prologue leads to the conclusion that Matthew not only answers the question of who is Jesus, but also, and perhaps above all, the question of who are His people. According to Piotrowski the answer is: "Israel are those under the eschatological Davidide's rule at the end of the exile as foreseen in the prophets, namely Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah" (p. 240). In chapter four, he shows that many Jewish groups of the Second Temple period accepted the idea of the ongoing exile, but Mathew's community was the only group who based its theology on the God-promised new David. The gospel message is that those who join Jesus, the New David, will come out of exile while the situation of the rest will be aggravated. This argument becomes very meaningful when taking into account the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

Piotrowski's book shows the Gospel of Matthew in a new way. The synchrono-us approach to the text proves to be a very effective method of literary criticism. Certainly the findings are very inspiring and open the field for further research.