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BOOK REVIEWS

Sebastian Mullooparambil, *Macrostructure of Matthew's Gospel*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2011. Pages: xvii+186. ISBN: 978-81-89958-40-4

The book *Macrostructure of Matthew's Gospel*, by Sebastian Mullooparambil, CMI, is a scholarly work, which is the fruit of extensive research on and dialogue with the various proposals regarding the structuration/sturcture of the Gospel of Matthew. The book is a genuine contribution to the study of Matthew's Gospel in that it puts forward a new structuration for the Gospel, which considers Mt 21:12-17 as a pivot and the central periscope in the general structure of the Gospel.

The book consists of five chapters. Chapter one is an evaluation of the already proposed structures. After having discussed the merits and demerits of these proposed structures, the author comes to the conclusion that since none of the proposals is exhaustive "efforts should be made to discover the outline of the Gospel on the basis of redactional critical study" (p.27).

In chapter two, Mullooparambil puts forward a new proposal for the macrostructure of Matthew's Gospel based on the understanding of "structure" as "an arrangement of the material describing the words and

deeds of Jesus in such a way that certain doctrines held by the author are expressed through the pattern of the whole work.” In the author’s opinion, Matthew’s purpose in arranging the material is to show that since the chosen people rejected the Messiah the Son of David sent to fulfil the promises of old, his mission is extended to the gentiles. In proposing the new general structure, Mullooparambil pays attention to this main thematic interest of the Gospel. He suggests a five-part structure: i) the pre-history of the child Jesus (1:1-2:23), ii) the ministry in and around Galilee (3:1-21:11), iii) Jesus in the temple (21:12-17), the ministry, passion and death in Jerusalem (21:12-28:15), and v) the Great Commission of the risen Jesus (28:16-20). The author tries to substantiate his proposal based on plot, geography, Christology, theme, chiasm, source, time, etc. This five-part division is conceived to revolve around the central or “hinge” unit, Mt 21:12-17.

In chapter three, Mullooparambil clarifies further his claim of the pivot or hinge role of the central text, Mt 21:12-17. He attempts to show this text as a point of arrival and a point of departure from a thematic point of view. He comes to the conclusion that the Matthean narrative, which is an organic literary piece having a thematic thread is divided into five unequal parts concentrating on the pivot text. The two sections prior to Mt 21:12-17 deal with the infancy of Jesus with an emphasis on Christology and the fulfilment of the Old Testament, followed by Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom of heaven coupled with teaching and healing. In the sections after Mt 21:12-17, the conflict which had already begun to emerge in Mt 21:15-16 was expanded to include, the crucifixion of Jesus, which then “outflows beyond the death and resurrection of Jesus” to conclude with the Final Commission (p.133-134). As the author

rightly claims, “The disparate material lumped together in the periscope is part of an attempt to unite the varying themes. Matthew’s attempt in 21:12-17 is to interweave and integrate the disparate themes into a single narrative whole, to bridge breaks rather than to create them” (p.134). In this regard, he finds a similarity of purpose between Mt 21:12-17 and Mk 8:27-30.

Chapter four discusses the unity of the various sections of the Gospel. Here the author tries to corroborate the thesis that the “Gospel is not a sum total of episodes unrelated to each other but a unit that consists of independent and interdependent parts” (p.135) to form a narrative unity with an overarching theme. He points out the importance of the title “Son of David” as a unifying element.

In his general conclusion, Mulloparambil compares the Matthean general structure to that of Mark and says that “though Mathew’s outline is influenced by Mark’s, there is a marked difference between the two. Mark upholds a central messianic confession, while Matthew, in accordance with his main message, upholds a central messianic rejection” (p.162). While restating the fruit of his research so as to establish the pivotal role of the temple cleansing episode in Mt 21:12-17 in the macrostructure of Matthew’s Gospel, the author indicates the need for further research to study Mt 21:12-17 from a redaction critical point of view. When further studies are pursued based on this new proposal regarding the structure of Matthew’s Gospel, as the author claims, it can remove many shadows surrounding the general scheme and uncover the mystery of universalism and particularism in Matthew.

Mullooparambil's work is a serious and original contribution to the scholarly research on the Gospel of Matthew. One of the merits of the study is that he makes use of multiple tools, like narrative analysis, structural analysis, and use of a redactional approach to arrive at his proposal. In this study one can envisage the seed for scientific research, which may rewrite many of the previous assumptions and conclusions on the Gospel of Matthew. Anyone who wishes to seriously study the Gospel of Matthew should consult this work for an alternate view on the overall shape and theology of the Gospel.

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