

Jiří Dvořáček, *The Son of David in Matthew's Gospel in the Light of the Solomon as Exorcist Tradition* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 415; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2016). Pp. XII + 258. €79. ISBN 978-3-16-154095-0

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The book presents an updated and complementary version of the doctoral dissertation “The Son of David in Matthew’s Gospel in the Light of the Solomon as Exorcist Tradition” submitted to the Theological Faculty of the Charles University of Prague and defended in September 2008. The author of the book, Jiří Dvořáček, is currently a pastor in the Reformed Church of Canton Zürich.

The main problem with Dvořáček’s thesis is his heavy reliance on the designation “Son of David” as found in the miracle healing stories (in six of nine cases) presented by the evangelist Matthew. The gospel writer seems to intentionally use the messianic title Son of David as a suitable and self-evident designation for Jesus within the context of his healing and exorcist activity. On this point the author poses the question: “why should Matthew use the concept of the healing Son of David if there was not a Jewish tradition which already linked healing and exorcism with Son of David?” (p. 27). In his opinion, the way in which the title Son of David is used in Matthew’s Gospel suggests there could have existed a tradition which influenced Matthew’s portraying Jesus in this way. Dvořáček assumes that the tradition which Matthew knew and incorporated in his Gospel was a “Solomon as exorcist” tradition. The purpose of his study is to show “the relevance of the Solomon as exorcist tradition for the interpretation of Matthew’s Gospel and to provide a deliberate interpretation of the relevant Matthean passages in the light of that tradition” (p. 29). Obviously this is not a new or especially revelatory hypothesis. As we understand from the section “A Review of Previous Research” (p. 23-45), the explication of the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition and its importance for NT Christology is known at least since the second half of the twentieth century. However, as Dvořáček notes, apart from several articles and a single monograph, there has been no further systematic research on the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition as used in Matthew’s Gospel, tied in particular to an interpretation of all the Matthean “Son of David” passages.

In order to prove the existence of an ancient Solomon-as-exorcist tradition, and its adaptation to a new reality among Matthew's Community, the author draws upon the exegesis of various sources, such as: OT, Pseudoepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic and Gnostic writings, and magical bowls, amulets and incantations. He primarily uses the tradition-history and redaction-critical approaches and also, to a lesser degree, narrative criticism. The book consists of four main parts: the introduction (chapter 1); general analysis of the history and development of the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition and the Davidic Royal messianic tradition (chapter 2); exegesis of all the relevant passages of Matthew's Gospel where the title Son of David is used, in light of a Solomon-as-exorcist tradition (chapter 3); and the summary (chapter 4).

After the introduction, Dvořáček moves immediately into his analysis of the Jewish background of the designation "Son of David". He begins by searching for the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition in early Jewish writings, locating its sources within biblical texts (1 Kgs 5:9-14 from LXX version; Wis 7:15-21) as well as the Qumran scrolls (11QApPs<sup>a</sup>), Josephus and Pseudo-Philo. The text of 1 Kgs 5:9-14 mentions Solomon as the author of numerous parables, odes and proverbs. According to Dvořáček, this fact suggests that Solomon could have written „incantations” as well. The next passage, Wis 7:15-21, provides a piece of information about the powers of spirits and varieties of plants/roots received by Solomon as knowledge from God. It is suggested that this knowledge of the powers of spirits refers to Solomon's knowledge of magic and demons, while the knowledge of the virtues of roots refers to exorcistic techniques. However, it is hard to prove this assumption based only on pre-Matthean sources. But the most interesting text for identifying an early Solomon-as-exorcist tradition seems to be the scroll 11QApPs<sup>a</sup>. This work contains four exorcistic psalms, including Psalm 91, where the name of Solomon appears in an evidently exorcistic setting. Unfortunately, the text is so fragmentary that we can say nothing more than this. The final two witnesses of the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition within early Jewish writings are Pseudo-Philo, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 60,3; and Josephus Flavius, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8,42-49. Both of these are contemporaneous with the traditions at work in the shaping of the Matthew's Gospel. The first one, *LAB* 60,3, is quite obscure, and questionable regarding who is supposed to be the ruler over the demons, Solomon being only one of many possible solutions. Meanwhile, the Josephus passage seems to be the most important and compelling of the entire chapter. In *Ant* 8,42-49 there is a certain Eleazar who performed an exorcism employing Solomon's name, incantations, and a ring with a root prescribed by Solomon. In this way, Josephus presents Solomon's exorcistic ability as a technique against demons and designated for healing. This proves that Solomon was viewed within an exorcistic and healing

context in Josephus' time, and thus could have been known in this way during the time of the making of Matthew's Gospel. The question is whether Matthew was aware of the existence of this tradition, and whether he had taken it into account or not. The answer, however, lies in the next chapter. After searching the early Jewish writings for a Solomon-as-exorcist tradition, Dvořáček moves on to a quite superficial analysis of other ancient works: the Nag Hammadi texts, *The Testament of Solomon*, Aramaic magical texts, and finally the Greek magical papyri. It is true that all of these texts attest that a Solomon-as-exorcist tradition was known not only within both the Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish communities, but also, due to syncretism, among Gentiles. However, the author proves that all these texts are attested only from the second century C.E. onward, hence they are transparently post-Matthean and thus cannot be considered as hard evidence for the existence of the tradition at the time of Matthew's Community. Still, this fact does not pose an insurmountable problem for the author. As he notes, we can assume that it took some time for the Solomonic tradition to develop, first within Judaism and then in Gnosticism and the heathen world, so the sources of these traditions could have been known at least as far back as the making the Matthew's Gospel. In the following sub-chapter the author focuses on the messianic expectations associated with the designation "Son of David" as the expected eschatological Messiah. In his analysis of various pseudepigraphic, Qumran and rabbinic texts, he proves that the title Son of David was indeed used by various Jewish communities to refer to the eschatological Davidic Messiah. The pre-Matthean messianic hope for the eschatological Davidic Messiah has long been known to scholars, so an examination of its sources may seem quite needless for this study, nevertheless the significance of this sub-chapter lies in its highlighting those potential sources, influences which could have been employed by Matthew in his portrayal of Jesus for the sake of polemic debate within his community.

In chapter 3, which is the main one, Dvořáček analyses all of the Matthean "Son of David" texts in order to prove that the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition may have influenced Matthew in his portrayal of Jesus. He begins with exegesis of the infancy narratives, where he finds an indirect link to the tradition in Jesus' conception through the Holy Spirit, which implies being endowed by the Spirit with healing and exorcistic powers. Furthermore, he finds Solomon typology in the similarity between the magi's pilgrimage to the infant Jesus (who is Wisdom; Matt 11:19) and the pilgrimage of foreign rulers, who traveled from afar to hear Solomon's wisdom and, as with the magi, honored him with gifts (cf. 1 Kgs 10:1-10; 2 Chr 9:23-24). The next focus of exegesis is a series of healing stories, ranging from the healing of the two blind men (9:27-31) to the healing of the blind and the lame in the temple (21:1-17). Finally, the chapter concludes with

the pericope concerning the question about David's Son (Matt 22:41-46). By way of analysis, Dvořáček points out that Matthew uses the title Son of David as part of people's cries for mercy and healing within the healing and controversy stories, some of which have a more summary function (cf. Matt 9:27-35; 20:29-34; 21:1-17). The author concludes that Matthew, by allusion to popular Solomonic tradition, builds a picture of Jesus as the Son of David who heals and casts out demons in a manner reminiscent of Solomon, but at the same time surpasses Solomon in his wisdom and stature. The question is: Why did Matthew connect the concept of the royal messianic Son of David with the non-messianic concept of the exorcistic/healing Son of David in the style of Solomon? According to Dvořáček, the reason is twofold: On the one hand, Matthew, using previously existing traditions, wanted to emphasize the therapeutic side of the messianic Jesus' mission; on the other hand, he could have used the Solomonic tradition in order to justify Jesus' dealings with demons, deflecting the Pharisaic charge that Jesus was a magician and deceiver (Matt 12:22-24.42). Furthermore, Dvořáček tries to address the counter-argument that Matthew removes Mark's more elaborate descriptions of the miracle worker's techniques and eliminates some of Mark's more manipulative miracles. Indeed, exorcism is more central in Mark (Matthew's primary source), whereas Matthew is more interested in the healing activities than exorcisms. In reply to this observation, Dvořáček notes, first, that Matthew abridges almost all of Mark's narratives. Moreover, in antiquity there was a close correlation between illness and its demonic cause, so it is not appropriate to distinguish sharply between exorcism and healing. What is lacking, in my opinion, is any explanation for the fact that the designation "Son of David" is always coupled with the title "Lord" in these healing contexts. As a result, we are left wondering about the significance of this synonymous use of the two titles within the same context, in light of a Solomon-as-exorcist tradition. Furthermore, considering the existence of different explanations for Matthew's use of the appellation "Son of David" (such as the Isaianic servant or the Davidic shepherd motifs), the author fails to compare and weigh the various hypotheses, a comparison that would have made the study much more valuable and useful.

To sum up, the thesis indeed represents a body of deft, systematic research into the use of the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition in Matthew's Gospel. The author searched out and explored all the possible sources of this tradition, with the goal of elucidating how it is employed in Matthew's Gospel. As a result of the author's work, we now have at our disposal one of the very few monographs dedicated to this subject. However, after reading the thesis – in reality, largely a revisiting of what was already known – we still embrace the prevailing view: that while the Solomon-as-exorcist tradition is not a strongly attested hypothesis, it cannot be ruled out as such.