

THEOLOGISCHE REVUE

117. Jahrgang

- August 2021 -

Dinger, Angelica: Basileia bei Origenes. Historisch-semantische Untersuchungen im Matthäuskommentar. – Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2020. (IX) 337 S. (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, 194), geb. € 90,00 ISBN: 978-3-16-159126-6

Origen's (henceforth O.) *Commentary on Matthew* (henceforth *CMt*) is partially transmitted in a Greek summarized redaction and in a much more shortened Latin translation to which a mass of fragments from Greek *Catena*e are to be added (34–39). It looks like a labyrinth and Angelica Dinger brilliantly manages to get out of it by following the traces of the concept of Kingdom (βασιλεία). Let us now retrace her path.

This book, deriving from a 2019 Frankfurt PhD thesis, is divided into three parts: introduction (1–43), main body (45–257) and conclusion (259–284). The introduction is also articulated in three chap.s. The first one (3–26) explains the methodological assumptions. Especially interesting are the considerations regarding the ongoing construction of Christian identity in the fluid religious environment of the Roman empire (10–16). Equally meaningful are the reflections on O.'s epistemology, in dialogue with the history of concepts (16–24). The second chap. (27–39) offers a synthetic but exhaustive excursus on the main trends in the Origenian research of the last century (27–33) and well-balanced assessments of the problematic transmission of the *CMt* (24–39). The introduction is closed by a presentation of the structure of the book (40–43).

The main body of the research is divided into six chap.s. The first one (45–65) offers a semantic examination of the term "kingdom" in Greek and Roman non-Christian literature, in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Alexandrine tradition. The political basic meaning acquires there intellectual and ethical nuances. In this path is located O.'s use of the concept.

In the following chap.s, instances of the concept of βασιλεία in the *CMt* are clustered in thematic circles (*Themenkreise*), for each of which one *CMt* paragraph is explored in depth. Chap. two (66–120) is thus focused on the descriptions of the βασιλεία to be found in *CMt*. First of all, the Kingdom is interpreted as referring to the Holy Scriptures and to their spiritual meaning (68–83). This exegesis is exemplified in *CMt* 10, 14 (on Mt 13, 51–52). Secondly, D. takes into consideration the instances where the Kingdom is identified with Christ himself (84–98), seen as mediator towards a spiritual knowledge. Model of this kind of interpretation is *CMt* 14, 7 (on Mt 18, 23). Christ is there defined αὐτοβασιλεία, which allows D. to bring forth rich considerations on O.'s attitude to express theological contents through philosophical means. The third section of the second chap. (99–111) is devoted to the verses where the Kingdom is described through the

imagery of the vineyard, whose analysis in *CMt* 17, 7 (on Mt 21, 43) enables D. to stress the intertextual networks of Old and New Testament texts in O.'s exegetical practice.

In this chap., D. clearly lays down the cornerstones of her research: O. interprets the Kingdom of Heaven as the right, allegorical understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Such comprehension is made possible by the mediation of Christ and leads to a virtuous way of life. Exegesis, Christology and ethics are strictly entangled.

The third chap. (121–135) is devoted to the evangelical expression “to take part in the Kingdom”. Conditions for this participation are the knowledge of Jesus’ spiritual teaching (see *CMt* 12, 32 on Mt 16, 28) and a virtuous conduct, so that the pious Christian takes part in the Kingdom already in this world (see *CMt* 12, 14 on Mt 16, 19). On the other hand, wealth is stated to be an obstacle but not an absolute hindrance to the participation in the Kingdom. Discussing *CMt* 15, 20 (on Mt), D. offers an in-deep insight into the socio-economic debates in third-century Christian communities.

The fourth chap. (172–195) is devoted to the disciples’ relationships with the Kingdom. D. sees in the disciples a model for any Christian. Analyzing *CMt* 13, 15 (on Mt 18, 1) D. underlines O.’s dynamic ecclesiology: greater or lesser understanding implies a hierarchy among Christians but progress and regression are always admitted.

In the fifth chap. (196–224), D. deals with the concept of Kingdom in connection with the Jews. D. is incisive in highlighting the competition between Jews and Christian for the interpretation of the Old Testament. In O.’s theological view, the Jews can lay no claim to the O.T. due to their refusal to recognize Jesus as the Christ. Their interpretation is literal and shallow, since it is unable to grasp the Christological contents, achievable only by means of allegory. As a result, “the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you [*i.e.* the Jews] and given to a people who will produce its fruit” (Mt 21, 43), as is stated in the verse whose Origenian treatment D. analyzes closely, stressing O.’s belief in the Jews’ final salvation in the *apokatastasis*.

The results obtained are counterchecked in the sixth chap. (225–257), where passages evoking the concept of Kingdom without its explicit mention in the commented verses are analyzed. D. can conclude that the emergence of a specific theme can lead O. to exploit the concept of Kingdom as an exegetical tool. That is the case of the major or minor closeness to Christ (228–236 on *CMt* 11, 16), eschatological perspectives (236–240 on *CMt* 13, 25) or the hierarchical arrangement of creatures, *i.e.* angels and humans (240–248 on *CMt* 15, 27).

The conclusive part of the volume (259–284) is articulated in three chap.s. The first one (261–270) reaffirms the crucial role of the concept of Kingdom for O. theology. In the second (27–276), D. focuses her attention on O.’s concrete exegetical practice, while in the third chap. (277–284) D. deals with O.’s construction of a Christian identity in dialogue with non-Christians and Jews.

The volume is concluded by *formalia* (285), a bibliography (287–322) and indexes of quotations (323–333), names (334–335) and notable things (336–337).

D.’s research deserves high consideration in the field of Origenian studies since it represents a unique attempt to study a single concept within *CMt*. D. provides an effective working model in reaching consistent conclusions analyzing work that avoids any systematic exposition.

The clearly demonstrated intellectual and Christological value of the Kingdom for O. could also be identified in other works by O., for instance *Homiliae in Ps. 81, 1* (GCS Origenes 13, 512).

Particularly noteworthy is D.'s care in philological issues: she is aware that *CMt*'s Greek text is a summary and consequently refuses a good number of Klostermann's conjectures (94; 150; 160; 245; 250), nevertheless she is careful in evaluating the Origenian material offered by the ancient Latin translation (147; 218; 252) and by the *Catena* (127; 273). This is exactly the method to follow in dealing with this insidious text. However, D. should have noted that in *CMt* 12, 32 (see 124–134), part of the paragraph (GCS Origenes 10, 141, 6–142, 26) does not originally belong to the context but has been transposed there by Klostermann. This conjecture is proved wrong by Niceta's *Catena*. *CMt* remains a minefield until the publication of a new critical edition.

The bibliography is up to date, selective and functional to the argument. Single additions could be suggested. For instance, the discussion of the didactic imagery in *CMt* 13, 15 (178–182) could profit from Bendinelli: Guido. *Il commentario a Matteo di Origene. L'ambito della metodologia scolastica dell'antichità*, Roma 1997 (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 60).

In conclusion, this book brings forth a cross-cutting reading of *CMt* and valuable assessments of a crucial crossroads in Christian theology. D. thoroughly portrays Origen as a true son of that age of anxiety which preludes late antiquity.

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