

BOOK REVIEW

Xue, Xiaxia E. *Paul's Viewpoint on God, Israel, and the Gentiles in Romans 9–11: An Intertextual Thematic Analysis* (Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2015). xiii + 303 pp. Pbk. \$34.99.

Xiaxia Xue, assistant professor of New Testament at China Graduate School of Theology, has written a unique monograph that develops and applies a new model for intertextual analysis of the New Testament. The focal text of her book, Romans 9–11, is appropriate for Xue to test her model, because Paul makes use of a wide variety of viewpoints and Old Testament citations in these three chapters. Xue's voice is currently one among many who have written on intertextuality in the Pauline corpus, but her study stands out because of her method of analysis, an intertextual thematic analysis, which she develops based on a modern linguistic theory of intertextuality.

In the first chapter, Xue explains how the scholarly discussion of Romans 9–11 will benefit from her work: 'this study will develop a new perspective on Paul's use of intertexts in Romans 9–11 by employing [Jay L.] Lemke's intertextual thematic analysis as a methodological control' (pp. 2-3). It is the constraint of a methodological control that Xue finds lacking in other intertextual readings of Romans 9–11: 'no one up to now has employed an appropriate intertextual methodological control which is based on an intertextual principle of meaning making in analyzing Paul's discourse' (p. 21). For Xue, Lemke's intertextual thematic analysis is an 'indispensable tool', and she adamantly demands that 'the whole discourse of Romans 9–11 must be examined within an intertextual thematic system' (p. 21).

Chapter 2 describes Lemke's theory of intertextuality and intertextual thematic analysis. Lemke himself is a proponent of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a school in modern linguistics most notably associated with M.A.K. Halliday, and so it comes as no surprise that Lemke's theory of intertextuality differs greatly from the forms of

intertextuality commonly used in biblical studies. Xue begins this chapter by clarifying these distinctions. For instance, the term ‘intertextuality’ is often taken by biblical scholars to refer simply to the relationship made between the Old Testament and the New Testament when New Testament writers make use of the Old Testament in some way. Analysis of this kind usually involves how the Old Testament is quoted (accurately or inaccurately), paraphrased, alluded to, echoed or otherwise engaged with by New Testament writers. Xue also accounts for the post-structuralist literary understanding of intertextuality that some biblical scholars have used. Differing from both of these views, Lemke, according to Xue, describes intertextuality from a social semiotic understanding of language where thematic patterns of language become common in certain situations. These thematic patterns get attached to social values within a community, which Lemke calls *intertextual thematic formations* (ITFs). An ITF, then, is a thematic formation associated with a specific value-orientation. Thus, a text that uses thematic formations to take a positive stance towards a social issue would belong to a different ITF than a text that uses similar thematic formations to take a negative stance against the same social issue.

Important for the relationships between ITFs in Xue’s model is the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia, which recognizes that within cultures there exists a multitude of voices that represent the various value-orientations of a society. When language users make use of thematic patterns of language, meaning is made through the relationships these patterns share with ITFs. Texts that contain co-thematic lexis characteristic of a community’s ITFs become related to the ITFs in two main ways: they are either allied with the social values associated with them, or they are opposed to them. Lemke’s intertextual thematic analysis goes further to characterize several ways that texts become allied to other texts: they can be complementary, affiliated or dialectically related.

Chapters 3–5 are the heart of the book. Xue implements Lemke’s analysis over the course of these three chapters, dividing the text into various sections: Rom. 9.1–29 (ch. 3), Rom. 9.30–10.21 (ch. 4) and Romans 11 (ch. 5). Xue uses a four-step procedure to analyze each of these sections. First, Xue analyzes the presentational meaning of a section, which ‘refers to what is “going on” in the text with respect to what is going on outside the text’ (p. 48). In this step Xue investigates the participants and processes in the text along with their

circumstances, and she then examines the clausal structures and their relationships ‘so that the presentational meaning of the thematic formations can be established under this close scrutiny’ (p. 67). In this step ITFs are also identified. For example, in Rom. 9.1–5, Xue establishes that Paul’s thematic use of language relates to the ITF ‘[Martyr-like Intercession for Israel]’ (p. 52), which describes Paul’s language patterns that read as if he is willing to sacrifice himself for his Jewish kinsmen, a mode of writing that was common in Jewish literature.

The second step in the procedure analyzes scriptural voices. In this step Xue identifies the texts in the Old Testament that Paul either imitates or cites, and she then analyzes how the co-texts of these Old Testament texts can inform the various ways the book of Romans relates to them. To use the same example, Xue finds significance in comparing Paul’s intercession in Rom. 9.3 with Moses’ intercession for Israel in Exodus 32; she writes, ‘If we read the following text of Rom 9–11, it shows that Paul’s voice here hints that his kinsmen committed the sin of idolatry through their unbelief in the mediator of the New Covenant’ (p. 60).

The third step analyzes thematic-organizational meaning, which explains the relationships between the thematic formations in each text—that is, how they ally with or oppose other thematic formations in the text. This step is the shortest in each section of analysis. In the fourth and final step Xue focuses on the voices in the text that come from the viewpoints of Paul’s Jewish contemporaries. Xue identifies the instances where Paul’s thematic formations are found in Second Temple literature and analyzes how Paul’s value orientations relate to these texts. The findings of all these sections are then synthesized in the final chapter where Xue concludes that ‘Paul’s discourse patterns share some continuity with his Jewish contemporaries, but the core of his value regarding how to include the Gentiles as God’s people ... is dissociated from his Jewish contemporaries in key ways’ (p. 240).

A major strength of Xue’s analysis is that the procedure attempts to be comprehensive in accounting for the relevant context(s) for the intertextual relationships created in Romans 9–11. Because intertextuality pertains to the context of culture in Lemke’s theory, it is not enough to only consider the contexts of Old Testament quotations. While the original contexts of the Old Testament may be relevant, and even vital, for accurately interpreting the New Testament’s use of the

Old Testament, it should be kept in mind that the New Testament writers were not the only interpreters of the Old Testament Scripture. Therefore, Xue's procedure of including synoptic readings of Romans 9–11 and Second Temple literature such as *4 Ezra*, *Baruch*, *Jubilees*, *Wisdom of Solomon* and the like demonstrates the cultural awareness that Paul's letter was shaped and understood in light of other traditions in first-century Judaism. Setting Romans beside these other texts, then, allows Xue to argue how they relate intertextually—that is, how they compare and contrast with respect to the value orientations they construe. This is where the greatest payoff is to be had in Xue's book; her analysis elucidates the distinctive character of Paul's use of the Old Testament by showing how Paul re-contextualizes contemporary Jewish patterns of texts concerning 'intercession, Israel, God's promise, God's people, righteousness and law' (p. 240). Paul reorients thematic formations by showing that God has not abandoned his people, but that he instead has been faithful to his covenant despite Israel's rebellion, and that he has included the Gentiles in his people.

One problem that stands out in Xue's analysis is that there seems to be some inconsistency or confusion with respect to the categories of Lemke's model. First, on p. 103 Xue writes that the ITF [God's People] is *expanded* in Paul's discourse, but then later on p. 110 mentions Paul's *development* of the ITFs [God's People] and [God's Mercy]. This appears to misconstrue the definition of ITF because according to Xue's earlier explanation of Lemke's model, ITFs are the already-established thematic patterns of language present in a community. Therefore, what Paul develops in his text is relationships with these ITFs, not ITFs themselves.

There is also an overlap of terminology in different parts of Xue's analysis. Xue writes about how thematic formations can be allied within the text of Romans. These are referred to as 'text-specific formations' in Lemke's model. For example, Xue writes, 'the author allies his formation of [Faith-Righteousness] with [Stumbling Stone]' (p. 129). The same terms of 'alliance' and 'opposition' are used to talk about how thematic formations in Romans relate with other 'co-thematic' texts. Using the same terminology to describe relations between in-text formations and relations between two different texts seems to downplay the significance of how Paul engages the heteroglossic voices in his cultural context. Whereas alliance between text-specific formations can show how a text coheres around certain

social values, the notion of allying or opposing relations with other texts describes how texts interact with the voices of their community. The former pertains to text-semantics (a term Lemke uses to refer to the thematic meanings that words take on in certain contexts), while the latter is purely intertextual. Therefore, a way to recover this distinction might entail the use of different terminology that keeps these two types of relationships separated, especially since they go on simultaneously in texts. However, this would entail deviating from Lemke's vocabulary.

There is also a general feature of the content in chs. 3–5 that stood out to me. Xue carefully identifies how value orientations are constructed by analyzing the presentational meaning in Romans 9–11. This part of the analysis is the longest in each chapter because Xue meticulously follows a clause-by-clause analysis. Greater attention, however, should also perhaps be given to the fourth step of Xue's procedure where thematic formations can be described according to how they relate to ITFs in contemporary Jewish texts. This is because Xue's study is described as an *intertextual* study and not a discourse analysis with intertextual considerations.

These three critiques perhaps stem from two larger difficulties with Lemke's model. The first difficulty is that Lemke's model is developed across about a half dozen articles, and these articles often lack in clarity with regard to defining terms. Xue even notes that 'his theory is developing, which means that sometimes his terminology and analysis are not adequately consistent' (p. 41). This is further made evident in ch. 2 where Xue describes the three kinds of allying ITF relationships: Complementarity, Affiliation and Dialectic. Xue here only offers quotations from Lemke to define these categories, and the reader cannot determine precisely what these definitions mean because they lack in clarity to begin with. Further, Xue seems to misname some of these relationships referring to Dialogic relations where she probably means Dialectic (e.g. pp. 136, 142 and 150).

Another added difficulty is that Lemke developed his model for a culture in which he was an embedded individual. This has the advantage of a community's ITFs being known or easily recoverable. However, Xue is faced with the challenge of adopting and adapting this model for a context in which she is not an embedded individual, but instead is distantly removed both culturally and temporally.

Nevertheless, Xue handles the task of adapting Lemke's model well, and she shows that Lemke's intertextual thematic analysis can be used

profitably for New Testament studies. Most assuredly, this monograph grasps the complexity of intertextuality and directs its attention in the right direction. Scholars who welcome the notion that meaning making is complex and are interested in the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as well as the relevance of Second Temple literature for New Testament studies will be intrigued by, if not delighted with, Xue's book.

Zachary K. Dawson
McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, ON