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The Dreams of Matthew 1:18-2:23: Tradition, Form, and Theological Investigation (Studies in Biblical Literature)

William J. Subash

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The Dreams of Matthew 1:18-2:23: Tradition, Form, and Theological Investigation critically examines the five dream passages of Matthew 1:18-2:23 to demonstrate that Matthew employed dream narratives to defend allegations concerning Jesus' birth and to provide etiological reasons both for why Jesus went to Egypt and how Jesus happened to live in Nazareth. A diachronic survey of dream records in the Ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Second Temple writings reveals that dream narratives fall into two major categories: message dreams and symbolic dreams. Every dream carries a distinct narrative function according to the objectives of the user. Typically, symbolic dreams appear in epic-like literature, and message dreams appear in narratives such as historical and religious writings.
The present analysis of the five dream accounts of Matthew 1:18-2:23 reveals that they fall into the message dream category. Each dream has at least one narrative function. In other words, Matthew does not merely record the dream experiences of the individuals but uses dreams to achieve his narrative objective.

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