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**Book review: Barbara Strzałkowska, *The Book of Proverbs 1–9 in the Septuagint. The Analysis of “Additions” and “Gaps” in Comparison with the Masoretic Text (MT) in Light of Ancient Textual Evidence*. Dissertations and Biblical Studies 48, Warszawa 2017, 662 p.**

**Recenzja: Barbara Strzałkowska, *Księga Przysłów 1–9 w Septuagincie. Analiza „dodatków” i „braków” w zestawieniu z testem Masoreckim w świetle starożytnych świadectw tekstualnych*, Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 48, Warszawa 2017, ss. 662**

**Keywords:** The Book of Proverbs; Septuagint; additions; gaps; Masoretic Text.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Księga Przysłów; Septuaginta; dodatki; braki; Tekst Masorecki.

For theology, the Bible is the main cognitive source. From the very beginning, Christians have accepted the Greek Bible (the Septuagint: LXX) as “their Bible”. Modern times have developed interest in the original texts of the Bible and in the case of the first part, it is primarily the Hebrew text. Researchers have begun to notice some differences between the Hebrew texts and their Greek counterparts and some of these differences have a significant impact on formulating theological conclusions. Thus, a research problem arises whether in the translation into Greek the text of the Septuagint used some other text than the pre-Masoretic one, from which the Masoretic text (MT), the Hebrew text (the so-called *Vorlage*) emerged later, or whether the LXX translation is only a reinterpretation of the pre-Masoretic text. These are extremely interesting research questions, for both learning the history of the biblical text and its impact, as well as for theology itself, as our perception of the Jewish and early Christian theology depends on this response.

“Twice Judaism gave Job to the world.”<sup>1</sup> These words of C.E. Cox could be as well applied to all the Hebrew books of the Old Testament as they concern the Hebrew and Greek texts. The matter becomes even more complex if we realize that we do not have original biblical texts, but only apocrypha (copies) which have been frequently “contaminated” due to more or less conscious motives of copyists. This applies to both the Hebrew and Greek text. If we have to answer the question of the mutual relations between these texts, it is necessary to get hold of the text, both Hebrew and Greek, which is as close as possible to the original. This is a task which belongs to textual criticism and is based on the analysis of not only a great number of texts but also the quality of the manuscripts, ancient translations, quotations by ancient authors, ancient lectionaries etc.<sup>2</sup> in order to get hold of the text which is closest to the original. It is a task that requires a very thorough knowledge of the original languages of the Bible and the supreme research skills in the field of historical and critical methods. However, we must realize that this is just the beginning. The comparison of Hebrew and Greek texts has to lead to specific conclusions related to both the history of the text and its theological interpretation. In this context, the very title of the monograph of B. Strzałkowska seems to be extremely interesting and promising.

Barbara Strzałkowska chose the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs as the foundation of her work because they belong to the so-called first collection in the structure of the book, and seem to be the least “contaminated” in relation to the original text, as the author herself has observed (p. 21). The Book of Proverbs is one of the most difficult books of the Bible, both in terms of language and theology. Undoubtedly, proverbs are the cultural, spiritual and literary legacy of nations or social groups. Some proverbs function only in the circle of a particular nation or language and are basically incomprehensible and untranslatable to other nations or language groups. If we realize that the proverbs in the Book of Proverbs – without discussing the problem of the literary genre of what the Hebrew language defines as *m<sup>e</sup>szalim* – were created in a historical and mental context which was typically Hebrew, it is not surprising that those who wanted to translate them into Greek had to face quite a challenge.<sup>3</sup> Another difficulty encountered by the author is certainly the Greek text of the Book of Proverbs in the LXX ver-

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<sup>1</sup> C.E. Cox, *The Historical, Social*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Tronina, *Tekst Pisma Świętego*, pp. 150–183; B.M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*.

<sup>3</sup> On the Book of Proverbs see further in L. Alonso Schökel – J. Vilchez lindez, *Proverbs*.

sion, which underwent many alterations in the process of transmission from the period of its creation to the time of its textual evidence. Extracting the Greek text and purifying it of all influences (“contaminations”) means getting to the most original text. Among these influences, the “additions” and “gaps” in comparison with the Masoretic text deserve particular attention. Strzałkowska decided to reach the most original version of the translation – bearing in mind that it might be a hypothetical version. At this point, we encounter the terminological problem concerning the concept of “additions” and “gaps” in relation to the Masoretic text. The author rightly observes that both concepts should be used in quotation marks, because: “it is not known whether it is really an ‘addition’ or a ‘gap’ as what may seem to be an ‘addition’ in the LXX may actually be a ‘gap’ in the MT and vice versa: a ‘gap’ in the LXX, can be a later gloss in the MT” (p. 21).

The subtitle of the book: *The Analysis of ‘Additions’ and ‘Gaps’ in Comparison with the Masoretic Text in Light of Ancient Textual Evidence* determines the scope of research. The author does not wish to analyze the whole text, even though she translates the whole Prov 1–9 from the MT and the LXX, combining them in the form of synopsis, which allows to place the analyzed “additions” and “gaps” in the broader literary context, but only the actual “additions” and “gaps” in order to get hold of the original text of the LXX Prov and subsequently show its character. Such a procedure also serves to learn the Hebrew text of the Book of Proverbs, because it may be a reflection of an earlier text from the one preserved in the MT. Undoubtedly, the lack of a good critical edition of the Book of Proverbs does not facilitate this task.

The *status quaestionis* clearly demonstrates that such a study has not been published in both foreign and Polish literature.

The analysis was preceded by a comprehensive introduction (pp. 15–83). Its content includes a discussion on the *status quaestionis*, critical publications, the LXX Prov manuscripts, contemporary translations, historical criticism of the LXX Prov and the character of the LXX Prov text. This introduction is indispensable to understand later analyzes. It seems to me, however, that the entire content of the introduction should constitute a separate chapter. In addition, the author frequently mentions the “nature of the translation of Prov”, without clarifying how she understands this concept.

The whole book is divided into three chapters. In the first one, B. Strzałkowska focuses on the text itself and the translation of Prov 1–8. The chapters present textual problems typical of the entire Greek version and this part of the book is a comparative study. It is worth mentioning that the author demonstrates excellent linguistic skills. A comparison of these texts leads to the conclusion about the textual complexity of the LXX Prov and also sets the

direction of research for the subsequent chapters of Prov. The author creates her own critical version of both the Hebrew and Greek texts of Prov 1–8. The departure point for the Hebrew text is the critical edition of *The Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ), but with reference to *The Biblia Hebraica* (BH) and *The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). The Greek text is cited after the critical edition of A. Rahlfs – R. Hanhart, but is enriched with remarks from other critical editions (Swete, Holmes or Parsons) and the author's own research based on available sources and manuscripts. The author is perfectly prepared for the translation work from Hebrew and Greek, but still she consults or refers to the proposals of other contemporary translations, which testifies to her humble approach to research. B Strzałkowska does not limit the scope of her research to translation, but introduces to it new elements, justifies her choices, discusses the content and enters into discussion with other scholars. It is a pity that at the end of this chapter there is not even a short summary which would help the reader embrace the detailed analysis presented in this part of the book. There is no doubt, however, that the author is a mature and independent researcher in the field of textual criticism.

The subsequent two chapters are devoted to the analysis of “additions” (II) and “gaps” (III) respectively. In both chapters, analyzes are conducted in a very detailed manner and the methodological rigor is clearly visible. In other words, they are perfectly written. What the author herself sets as the objective of analysis<sup>4</sup> has been realized with “a Swiss precision”. The departure point is to provide a list of both “additions” and “gaps” and their division into “apparent and proper additions” and “apparent and appropriate gaps”. There are many more additions (34 examples) than gaps (21) and a logical consequence of this is the fact that the proportional number of chapters could not be maintained. The author is not satisfied with the analysis of “gaps” or “additions” as such, but she locates them in the context of the entire verse. Final conclusions are hypothetical, which is customary in the case of textual criticism. The author draws the interpretative conclusions of theological nature, embedding them in the cultural and historical context in which the Greek

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<sup>4</sup> The first aim is: “an attempt to answer the question about its [addition] character, whether the origin or the change is proper or apparent; whether it comes from a translator or from later revisors of the text; and perhaps what is the addition of the LXX is, in fact, a gap in the TM (which has disappeared over the centuries of the text formation in the book). It might be the result of an error on the part of a copyist or transfer from one place in the text to another” (p. 254). In the second case: “Are [the gaps] the work of translator who deliberately omitted certain texts? Or are they the work of later revisors of the text? Or perhaps this Hebrew text has an addition in comparison to the Greek one? Or other Hebrew *Vorlage* of the given text is responsible for the gap?” (p. 515).

translation was created. However, once again, there is no clear summary after such detailed analyzes.

The lack of summaries in individual chapters can be explained when reading the final chapter, which perfectly synthesizes the conclusions originating from the analyzes of “additions” and “gaps”. The author perceives four main reasons for their appearance in the Greek text: 1) translator’s own work; 2) the error of copyists; 3) a deliberate interference in the text of the later revisors of the LXX Prov; 4) another *Vorlage* of the text that the LXX translator had at his disposal. The author provides specific examples of these causes in Prov and, at the same time, she is aware that each case should be analyzed separately, as it is not possible to apply one initial thesis to all texts. The statement that the LXX translators used other texts than the MT *Vorlage*, the view which is frequently cited in textbooks such as *A General Introduction to the Holy Bible* could be a starting matrix. The author also demonstrates humility in her approach to research stating that the differences between the MT and the LXX are not always unambiguous and easy to explain (p. 618). The author argues vigorously with those scholars who offer too unambiguous interpretation of the issue of “gaps” and “additions” in the LXX Prov. Perhaps these researchers have not conducted as thorough and convincing analyzes as the author. It would be useful, therefore to obtain funds to disseminate the author’s research in English. B. Strzałkowska does not only present the conclusions which belong to the textual history, but also indicates the interpretative reasons resulting from the theological premises and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Greek translation.

Undoubtedly, the reviewed monograph meets the highest international standards. It is an extremely important contribution to the understanding of the Greek translation of Prov. 1–9, which constitutes the beginning of all Christian theology. B. Strzałkowska has an excellent research expertise not only as a biblical scholar, but also as a theologian. Her analyzes are, by all means, innovative. Her work can be used not only by biblical scholars but also by theologians. The analyzes carried out refute the view that “textual criticism” as a field of biblical studies does not serve theology, on the contrary it is indispensable to reconstruct the development of theological thought.

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