

Hieronymus, *Biblia Sacra Vulgata. Lateinisch-deutsch. Vol. 3: Psalmi – Proverbia – Ecclesiastes – Canticum canticorum – Sapientia – Iesus Sirach*, edited by Andreas Beriger, Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers and Michael Fieger, Sammlung Tusculum, Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018. ISBN 978-3-11-048835-7. Pp. 1247. €79,95/\$91.99/£72.50.

- [1] Without doubt the Latin translation called *Vulgate* is of apt significance for Biblical scholars, because it is an early translation of the Old and the New Testament by Jerome (*Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus*), a distinguished early Christian writer, and it became an – more or less – authoritative text of the Bible thereafter (cf. the distinguished importance of the *Vulgate* for the Roman Catholic Church). Moreover, for textual critics the *Vulgate* embodies a relevant source in various ways: (a) it is a testimony to a certain translation technique, as its author, Jerome, explicitly refers to what he deals with and how he works with his *Vorlage* (or *Vorlagen*, as it is the case with the present volume and the Book of Psalms). (b) The *Vulgate* is a key source for finding out more about the potential nature of the text it, as a translation into Latin, represents. (c) Accordingly, the *Vulgate* offers insights into some specific phrasings and even the whole body of texts of its *Vorlage(n)*. (d) For textual criticism Jerome’s translation holds clues for reaching a decision together with, for instance, the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX) or the Peshitta, or the manuscripts and other sources utilized for producing a critical edition of the New Testament. (e) The present volume is of special interest to both scholars of the Old and the New Testament, because the Book of Psalms plays a major role for each part of the Christian Bible, because the authors of the New Testament texts make generous use of psalms in allusions and by quoting literally from them.
- [2] The present volume is the third in the series of altogether five published in 2018: *Vol. I: Genesis – Exodus – Leviticus – Numeri – Deuteronomium*; *Vol. II: Iosue – Iudices – Ruth – Samuhel – Malachim – Verba dierum – Ezras – Tobias – Iudith – Hester – Iob*; *Vol. IV: Isaias – Hieremias – Baruch – Ezechiel – Daniel – XII Prophetae – Maccabeorum*; *Vol. V: Evangelia – Actus Apostolorum – Epistulae Pauli – Epistulae Catholicae – Apocalypsis – Appendix*. The three editors supply the reader with a rather short but concise introduction (reprinted in all the volumes of the series) to the history of the *Vulgate* (7-9), its interrelations with the *Vetus Latina* (a collective term for older rivalling translations into Latin), and their choice taken in favour of the critical edition of the *Vulgate* by Weber and Gryson for the Latin text they reprint and translate. Weber/Gryson do not rely on the Sixto-Clementina but merely focus on manuscript evidence in order to reconstruct “den ursprünglichen Text so genau wie möglich” (9, from Weber/Gryson, XIX; “the original text as precise as possible”). Purpose and aim of the translation project is to provide an equivalent of the *Septuaginta Deutsch* (LXX.D) so that a philologically correct and, following the evidence backed by manuscripts, documented translation is accomplished that represents the late classical Latin of the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century in

readable German that is still close to a text that was understood by readers (prior to the Reformation) who did not know any of the Hebrew or Greek model texts. Many translators and editors were involved in the project and the texts they produced were read as a check and discussed many times over and over again prior to final decisions on how a phrase, verse or sentence should be translated in the target language. The editors regard the translation as a “Hilfsmittel zum Verständnis des gegenüber gedruckten Texts” (i.e., the Latin *Vorlage*; 11; a “tool for understanding the printed text on the opposite page”) so that they do not aim at producing an interlinear or slavishly synoptic edition but they want to offer a handy tool for everybody who would not have easy access to Jerome’s translation on their own.

- [3] For the all the books offered the editors present the Latin text on the left and the German translation on the right so that original and translation are facing each other. The *Psalmi*, however, are arranged in a more complicated way, a result from Jerome’s own presentation of the *liber Psalmorum iuxta septuaginta emendatus* and *liber psalmorum iuxta hebraicum translatus*. These two are set opposite each other (with an apparatus of biblical references underneath the Latin translation of the LXX alone) and each with its own German translation at the bottom of the two pages. The presence of both, the Latin version of a Hebrew and Greek *Vorlage* Jerome has had available, makes a parallel reading of the two texts and its translations into the modern target language a treasure trove for finding interesting differences that ought to be taken serious for the study of the Old Testament in general, the LXX and the New Testament (especially, for passages in which psalms are cited) in particular.
- [4] Apart from the Latin and German biblical texts, there are Jerome’s introductory remarks to *Psalmi* (14-21; *praefatio*), *Proverbia* (*prologus in libris Salomonis*) and *Iesus Sirach* (*prologus*). And these *incipit* sections are of stunning interest for scholars from diverse theological and philological disciplines:
- [5] (a) Jerome writes a letter to the Bishops Cromatius und Heliodor (770-773), in which he describes conflicts with unnamed critics of his work, deals with *commentarios in Osee Amos Zaccharim Malachiamque* that he was unable to compose so far due to bad health, and mentions the package of writings he sends, the three books of Salomo: first, there is *Masloth* (the Hebrew and a translation for this and the other terms is offered in footnotes), called *Parabolas* by the Hebrews but *Proverbia* in the vernacular. Second, there is *Koheleth*, that is *Ecclesiastes* in Greek and *Contionatorem* in Latin, and, third, *Sirassirim*, *Canticum canticorum* in Latin. Then, Jerome lists *Iesus filii Sirach liber* and another book, which he defines as *ψευδοεπιγραφος*, *Sapientia Salomonis*. According to Jerome the first was not called *Ecclesiasticus* but it had the title *Parabolas* and it was connected with *Ecclesiastes* and *Canticum canticorum*, the latter not to be there *apud Hebraeos*. Then follows a brief discussion relevant for the formation and discussion of the canon: these two books should be read for edification by common people, just as *Iudith et Tobi et Macchabeorum libros legit quidem Ecclesia* should serve the same purpose. These texts should not be

used to justify ecclesiastical dogmas. And if there are people who prefer the LXX for reading, they should just do so, because Jerome did not mean to produce anything “new” (*nova*), rivaling or even destroying the “old” (*vetera*) by translating the Greek Old Testament.

- [6] (b) The *prologus* to *Iesus Sirach* (1024-1027) then comes without addressees and focusses on a rhetorically attractive justification of Jerome’s translation work. He asks readers to be lenient with him, because translations might be only reflections of their originals. But when he came to Egypt in the 38<sup>th</sup> year of King Ptolemaios Euergetes, Jerome detected books which he found worth being read and translated, as these books contain rules for life (*mores*) in accordance with God.
- [7] (c) The two introductory remarks to the Book of Psalms – *incipit praefatio Eusebii Hieronymi in libro Psalmorum* (14-15) and *incipit alia eiusdem praefatio* (16-21) – are formulated as letters: (i) the first is directed to Paula and Eustochium,<sup>1</sup> who are directly addressed in the text and who regard the early but swift translation of the *Psalterium* Jerome has made while Rome as being corrupted by a scribe. That is why he provides his addressees with a corrected version of his earlier translation. He also points out that he uses obeli, asterisks and colons to mark his own modifications and additional material of the LXX. Additions from “Hebrew rolls” are identified with stars (*stellae*). In addition, Jerome also utilized Theodotion’s edition, *qui simplicitate sermonis a Septuaginta interpretibus non discordat* (“who does not differ from the LXX as far as the simplicity of his language is concerned”, 14). (ii) The second *praefatio* is formally addressed to a certain Sofronius. Jerome refutes claims that the Psalter consists of five books. He follows the testimonies of the Hebrews and the apostles, who always name the Psalter *the* Book of Psalms, and he himself confirms only the existence of *one* book. Jerome testifies that the psalms were composed by exactly those authors who are mentioned in the titles (David, Asaf, Jedutun, the sons of Korach, Heman the Esrachite, Moses, Salomo, and all the others who Esra put together in one roll only). For Jerome *amen* or *amen amen dico vobis* are not necessarily indicating the end of a book and consequently the beginning of a new one. In the Books of Mose and Jeremiah *amen* is inserted rather often, but it does not indicate a new book, so Jerome. There are twenty-two Hebrew books and, as the Hebrew title *Sephar Thallim* proves, even these – backed by apostolic attestation – do not designate many books but just one book roll (*non plures libros, sed unum volumen ostendit*). Sophronius should be persistent and translate the psalms into Greek, which he, as we know, did, and he did not work on the psalms alone. Furthermore, Jerome underlines that there are diverse Greek translations (Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion) but diversity

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1 Paula and her daughter, Eustochium, are known for having travelled to the Holy Land. In Rome, Jerome became the women’s spiritual guide, they traveled after him to Palestine and accompanied him to Egypt. He claims to have written several letters to Eustochium (*de viris illustribus* 135), about whom (and her mother) he writes in more detail in his *epist.* 108 (CSEL 55.306-351), where he claims their noble ancestry as Roman patricians.

should not confuse his readers when they discuss matters of faith and exegesis of texts with Jews.

- [8] The Latin texts are clearly structured and orientation within the books is rather easy. The German translations are written in a fluent and very readable style in accordance to the editors' policy given in the introduction and they do not reflect a pastoral tone or any ecclesiastical touch (11: "Wir haben uns dabei bemüht, einen pastoralen beziehungsweise Luther-Ton zu vermeiden und uns an die immer auch mit Rücksicht auf sein Zielpublikum eingehaltene Sprachebene des Hieronymus gehalten." "We have made great effort to avoid a pastoral or Luther-tone and always to maintain Jerome's language level in view of his audience addressed.").
- [9] Every volume of the series comes with the same final chapter on measures, weights and currencies (here 1245-1247), which is very helpful (a) for comprehending exactly what ancient terms mean when they are converted into their modern equivalents (kilograms, litres, kilometres etc.) and (b) for referencing, because the passages of their use are given.
- [10] Editors are to be congratulated for the whole series of volumes that provide a for long needed, very helpful, trustworthy and indispensable tool. With the complete *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* on the shelf every biblical scholar – and a researcher of textual criticism in particular – is well equipped for studying this essential translation work; and we even learn about Jerome's motivation for, the attendant circumstances and background of accomplishing such a comprehensive project.

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