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Fernández-Marcos, Natalio

Introducción a las versiones griegas de la Biblia

Textos y Estudios «Cardenal Cisneros» 64

Madrid: Instituto de Filología del CSIC, 1998. Pp. 412, Paperback, No Price Available, ISBN 8400077601.

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This work is a comprehensive discussion of issues relating to ancient translations of the Jewish scriptures into Greek. It is organized in five major sections: (1) introductory remarks on basic philological matters pertaining to the study of *koiné* Greek and on the practice of translation in antiquity; (2) the origins of the LXX; (3) the post-LXX Jewish tradition of Greek scriptural translation; (4) the transmission of the LXX in Christian tradition; and (5) the influence of the LXX on various aspects of Christian origins. Fernández Marcos takes up a series of questions under these headings, addressing each in turn with a summary description of past scholarship, an assessment of the current scholarly debate, and recommendations for future work. The entire discussion is permeated with excellent bibliographical notes citing an ample and well-chosen selection of both primary and secondary sources.

The author aims to provide a critical summary of the state of the discussion on a host of issues, and the book's helpfulness on this score should not be understated. For example, in the third section Fernández Marcos gives a remarkably succinct description of the debate over the significance of apparently "proto-Theodotionic" texts. He sides with those who hold that the *kaige* recension is symptomatic of a proto-Theodotionic tendency prior to Aquila, culminating in the later consolidation of these tendencies in the work of the historical Theodotion; and he criticizes Barthélemy's view of the *kaige* recension as the work of Theodotion himself, and thus evidence that Theodotion preceded Aquila. However, because Fernández Marcos covers both sides of the argument, even readers who might finally want to disagree with him can be profitably introduced by him to the discussion. In this sense, the work is a good "introduction." A specialist might want to review it by examining how well Fernández Marcos deals with other equally prominent issues in the field. As a non-specialist, however, I have other concerns. I leave it to the specialists to debate whether he might have handled particular questions better, noting only that regardless of which side Fernández Marcos chooses, his book can usually provide us with informed access to the debate. I am more concerned

with his overall coverage of the field and its far-reaching implications for what the rest of us biblical scholars generally do.

This is an “introduction” in the classical sense of the term, as it was used when historical criticism was in its heyday. Introductions to the Old Testament used to presuppose that readers already had a full-blown humanistic education, and on this foundation would add as superstructure a discussion of the historical-critical issues relating to each book or section of the Old Testament, based on the Hebrew text. Such works served to introduce those already well formed as scholars to the *status quaestionis* of each topic of Old Testament study. This is the approach associated with such great names as Sellin, Eissfeldt, Bentzen, and Pfeiffer, etc. In their day an “introduction” to the LXX would in turn presuppose that its readers had mastered their kind of “introduction” to the Old Testament, and would add as additional superstructure a discussion of issues emerging from the translation of the Jewish scriptures into Greek in the Second Temple period. This is the approach associated with Henry Swete’s *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (1902) and Sidney Jellicoe’s *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (1968). The work of Fernández Marcos is in the same classic mold. It is an introduction to the Greek Old Testament that presupposes general familiarity with Old Testament scholarship, and yet there are some discontinuities with its predecessors that deserve to be noted.

There were certain assumptions built into this two-tiered approach to “introduction”—that is, introduction to the Old Testament based on the Hebrew text followed by introduction to the LXX and other Greek versions. At the risk of caricature, or at least oversimplification, one could say that textual criticism, literary criticism, translation and history of interpretation were assumed to be more or less separate concerns that could be dealt with more or less sequentially. One first established the Hebrew text, perhaps consulting the LXX but only in order to see what light it shed on the supposedly original Hebrew. Then one dealt with the literary questions of authorship, dating, and genre, etc. Then one turned to consider the translation of the document into Greek, and perhaps other languages, as a secondary development. And finally, if enough time and energy were left, one considered as an afterthought how translation—always in effect an interpretation—launched an ongoing history of *Nachinterpretation*. Of course it was recognized that these types of analysis were to some extent interrelated, in the sense that each was somehow prior to the next, but not that they were mutually interdependent. With respect to its own generic form, Fernández Marcos’s work is the kind of “introduction” that assumes this procedural sequence. With respect to its content, however, it tells us that such an assumption is no longer tenable.

According to Fernández Marcos, we can no longer think in terms of an original Hebrew text but in terms of a pluriform Hebrew text, one form of which is indirectly attested by the LXX. We can no longer presuppose that the original form of a biblical document is represented by the extant Hebrew text, and that the Greek versions represent a secondary development. In the case of Jeremiah, for example, the shorter LXX represents an earlier form of the book and the longer MT a secondary development. We can no longer imagine the composition of a biblical document in terms of redaction

aimed at establishing a final form of the text, after which a process of interpretation set in. Rather, we must reckon with interpretation as a factor already influencing the text's assumption of its various final forms. Such realizations are in themselves hardly new, but they have not yet achieved enough collective momentum to reshape the way biblical scholarship is actually done "in the trenches." Their masterful summarization by Fernández Marcos may well help them to gain such momentum, but once they do there may be no call for this kind of book. Many of the issues treated by Fernández Marcos will then be incorporated into our "introduction" to biblical studies, and not be relegated to a separate, secondary introductory work. In the meantime, this is an extremely helpful resource, and the recently announced publication of an English translation will make it more widely accessible.