

RBL 02/2009

**Wright, Robert B., ed.**

***The Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text***

Jewish and Christian Texts In Contexts and Related Studies 1

New York: T&T Clark, 2007.

Pp. xi + 224. Hardcover. \$125.00. ISBN 0567026434.

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This critical edition of the Greek text of the Psalms of Solomon is the first volume to appear in this series, which is edited by James H. Charlesworth. Wright is an obvious choice for this volume, since he produced the English translation of the Psalms of Solomon in volume 2 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), guided several doctoral students' work on the text, and served as an external examiner on another (41).

The book places the Greek text and an English translation on facing pages, with a critical apparatus of the Greek text and notes on the translation appearing at the bottom of their respective pages. The volume includes a survey of the history of scholarship on the Psalms of Solomon, with special attention given to the date, authorship, and provenance of the text. Wright also provides a rather full description of the Greek manuscripts, their tradition, and the history of scholarship on the Greek texts. He also has developed helpful charts for such information as the various lettering and numbering systems of the manuscripts (28). He gives less attention to the Syriac textual tradition, only noting significant differences between it and the Greek textual traditions. An extensive bibliography on the Psalms of Solomon appears at the end of book.

For a nominal fee, one can purchase a CD from Wright that contains pictures of the manuscripts, including Syriac texts. The CD proves quite easy to use, and the manuscripts are beautifully photographed and easily readable. In this, Wright has offered a tremendous service to Second Temple Judaism scholarship, which I hope that others will follow. Obviously, the CD is well worth the additional cost.

Wright justifies the need for this critical edition as follows:

This edition differs from those preceding it in five respects: availability of new MSS, completeness of the collation by including all variant readings from all of the MSS (and removing all precious conjectural emendations and introducing no new ones), inclusion of significant variants from the Syriac MSS, improved accuracy of the collation by employing technological advances in the editing process, and the simple fact that this editor has personally compared this collation with all twelve of the extant Greek manuscripts. (44)

As Wright notes, von Gebhardt in his 1895 edition made use of only eight manuscripts, only four of which he had examined himself. For the other four he relied on collations supplied to him. Since von Gebhardt's text, four other manuscripts have been discovered, the latest coming in 1961 (44–45). Rahlfs's 1935 Greek text in *Septuaginta* relies on von Gebhardt's text, to which Rahlfs added a few of his own emendations. Thus, Wright's critical text is in many ways the first since 1895.

Robert Hann's *stemma* (*The Manuscript History of the Psalms of Solomon* [SBLSCS 13; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982]), determined by the Claremont Profile Method, provides the foundation for Wright's textual reconstruction (25–27, 45). Wright's goal is not the recovery of the original text from the first century B.C.E.—the Hebrew *Urtext*—but the text that would have given rise to the existing Greek manuscripts in Hann's *stemma* (26). For Wright, this decision means sometimes accepting a lexically impossible Greek form or reading if it explains how other readings might have come into existence (45–46). Therefore, in the process of choosing between variants, Wright begins with external criteria and moves to internal criteria, “and the latter were governed by the principle of giving weight to the reading that best explains the origin of the other readings” (45).

He began the production of this critical Greek text with the electronic version of Rahlfs's text, which is made available by CCAT (Center for Computer Analysis of Texts at the University of Pennsylvania, Robert A. Kraft, director) (47). Wright then removed all of von Gebhardt's and Rahlfs's conjectural emendations (47). The process continued by adding the variants from all the manuscripts into the file, and then progressed through several complicated technological stages (47). Finally, Wright verified all variants against the actual original Greek manuscripts themselves—not simply photos (47). The text that results from this process very much resembles that in the von Gebhardt–Rahlfs tradition, absent, of course, any conjectural emendations, just as Wright promises in the introduction (see, e.g., 2:19; 5:10, 18; 6:3; 8:1, 3, 11; 9:6, 7, 9; 13:5; 15:7; 16:1; 17:9, 14, 15, 21, 32, 45; an

apparent emendation in von Gebhardt and Rahlfs is omitted in 9:7c). Wright's text follows the punctuation in MS 253 (47) and Rahlfs's versification (30).

There are a few instances where a space between Greek words is either lacking or has been wrongly added, which means that new variants now appear in the textual tradition of the Psalms of Solomon (see, e.g., 1:8; title of psalm 2; 8:3; 9:2, 10; 12:6; 16:6 [in text and apparatus]; 17:28; 18:8). A line of Greek in Wright's Ps. Sol. 2:28, κραταιὸς ἐν ἰσχύι αὐτοῦ τῆ μεγάλῃ, is located in 2:29 in von Gebhardt's and Rahlfs's texts. However, in Wright's English translation the line appears in 2:29, as it does in von Gebhardt and Rahlfs. Since there is no explanation of the phrase in Wright's notes, I assume that he has somehow misplaced the line from 2:29 and that von Gebhardt and Rahlfs are correct in this instance. The versification between the Greek and English texts differs in 8:4–5, where Wright's Greek text matches von Gebhardt while his English translation reflects the division in Rahlfs.

The English translation has several problems related to footnoting. The numbers in the translation and the footnotes do not correspond on page 77. This is corrected on 78 by repeating a footnote number from the previous page. On pages 89–97 the footnote numbers in the translation start over at 1, 2, 3..., while the notes at the bottom of the page have continued the consecutive numbering held thus far in the book, 87, 88, 89.... This happens again on pages 121, 125, 127, and 135. While a person using the translation can work through this problem, confidence in the text may begin to erode. The text has other basic formatting issues as well.

Wright's translation differs in several places from his earlier translation in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. This new translation tends to be freer and more willing to depart from the idioms and metaphors of the text in order to render "the psalms into contemporary English that attempts to preserve an accurate representation of the meaning of the Greek: The English is intended to be no more, but also, no less, ambiguous than the Greek" (48). As a result, and very unlike his earlier translation, several verses in the text lose the "biblical" ring with which interpreters are familiar. However, the translation sometimes reveals inconsistencies in this area. For example, in 3:3 he translates Δίκαιοι μνημονεύουσιν ... τοῦ κυρίου as follows: "The Lord is on the mind of the righteous," which differs from "The righteous remember the Lord" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* translation. Given the importance of the metaphor of "remembering" in the Hebrew Bible tradition and the highly developed theology attached to the metaphor, Wright probably should have stayed with his translation in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. However, later in Wright's new translation, when a similar phrase appears in 6:1, his text reads as follows: "When they remember [μνημονεύειν] the name of the Lord they will be saved." This, of course, resembles his translation of the

word in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* and contrasts to his decision in his new translation of 3:3.

Wright decides to treat ὁ δίκαιος, which frequently appears in the Psalms of Solomon, as a gnomic singular that is best translated in English as a plural (81 n. 67). This means that, even though the noun and its accompanying verb may be in the singular, Wright regularly renders these as English plurals. For example, the Greek in Ps. Sol. 3:5 reads Προσέκοψεν ὁ δίκαιος καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν τὸν κύριον, which Wright translates, “The righteous stumble and still prove the Lord is right.” Further, singular pronouns in Greek for which the antecedent is ὁ δίκαιος are treated as plurals in English. For example, Wright translates ἡ εὐδοκία αὐτοῦ as “their desire” (3:4). This is also a departure from his earlier translation.

It is unfortunate that this valuable work contains the technical glitches mentioned above. The publisher or series editor probably should have caught this problem. However, just prior to posting this review, I received an additional CD that includes the manuscripts and a corrected text. The introduction to this electronic material states that mistakes in the earlier edition, apparently the book edition, have been corrected. Indeed, a brief check of some of the footnoting problems mentioned above shows that Wright has made corrections in this electronic version. However, other different readings appear in the text, such as at 1:8 mentioned above. I do not know if this CD will be placed within the book on library shelves. Since the electronic version does not include T&T Clark in the front matter, I doubt that such an arrangement has been made. The CD that I received is designated 3.1. This may mean that Wright plans to continue to adjust his text and translation. If this is the case, keeping up with the latest version may become difficult.

This matter aside, that Wright has personally examined the manuscripts and collated the variants makes the book a significant contribution to the study of the Psalms of Solomon. Obviously, one should now seek out the CD (3.1) of the text if at all possible, since it contains what Wright considers improved readings and corrections. While I prefer Wright’s translation in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, one can understand the difficulty of producing a different translation for this new volume. Because this newer translation is somewhat freer, his earlier translation keeps the reader closer to the Greek text.