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This collection of eleven essays is a companion volume of pilot studies that culminated from a workshop held in Bühl, Germany, on January 21 and 22, 2011. Growing out of the projected Historical and Theological Lexicon of the Septuagint (HTLS) project, the present volume’s aim is “to contribute to the development of an adequate approach” to the linguistic, theological, and historical problems associated with the task of writing a lexicon of this nature. The contributions within, most of which read like adapted oral presentations, focus on individual words, word groups, or literary-historical concerns in Greek literature, papyri, inscriptions, the Septuagint, Hellenistic Greek writers, the New Testament, and/or early Christian literature, with various emphases and goals for each. One essay focuses on the scope and problems involved with a grammar of the LXX and New Testament.

Ralph Brucker’s “A Sample Article: ᾳδω” follows the format of the HTLS project in that it traces the usage and meaning of the verb ᾳδω “to sing” in Classical Greek, the papyri and inscriptions, the Septuagint, Greek Jewish literature, the New Testament, and early Christian literature. Brucker provides statistics on its intransitive and transitive use (+ acc. gen. and dat.) and its use in contrast to and in verbal hendiadys with λέγω (2–3). The meaning “to sing something new” is found the LXX and New Testament is already found in the fifth century BCE (3). Although ᾳδω is also found in cultic inscriptions and numerous hymns in which the name of a deity is normally the accusative objecy (to sing
of, to praise), it is uncommon in the papyri (4–6). In the LXX (73x) ἔδω normally renders רִשׁ. However, ἔδω only has a human subject and uses another verb when רִשׁ is used of animals. Brucker suggests that this may be because ἔδω may have been associated with cultic contexts (7–8). In Philo’s works, ἔδω is used with the greater variety of Classical Greek, but most instances occur with reference to biblical citations, especially with Moses as the subject (9–11). Likewise, ἔδω in Josephus (9x) “reflects the range of common usage” (11), and even though the verb is found in reference to biblical scenes, most do not come from a quote of the LXX but are Josephus’s usage. Beyond these two writers, ἔδω is rarely found in other Jewish Greek literature (12). The New Testament (5x) reflects the LXX usage (in which angels are never the subject) (13). Also in early Christian writings (e.g., Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle to Diognetus) ἔδω takes on its normative usage, and it is not until the fourth century CE that angels are the subject of this verb (13–15).

In “Kämpfen, Mühsal und Elend in der Septuaginta: Die von ΑΕΘΛ- /ΑΘΛ- abgeleitete Wortgruppe,” Christoph Kugelmeier examines the language of struggle and hardship from the ΑΕΘΛ- /ΑΘΛ- word group in the LXX. Occurring regularly in connection with pagan Greek life (e.g., the ἀγών), αθλ- words are abundant in epigraphic and Classical Greek sources, and even later in Philo, but uncommon in the LXX outside of Maccabees (17). As early as Homer derivative forms are found that associate winning a prize and victory with hardship, the fight, and long struggle. While the αθλ- group pertained initially to the competition for a prize, it was later extended metaphorically to pertain to a struggle for things that are difficult to obtain (20). Since the association and use of ἄεθλον (“prize”) and ἄθλος (“fight”) are increasingly extended to the Pan-Hellenic competitive games (see Pindar), the image of ἀθλητής par excellence (i.e., as known in the examples cited of Hercules’s struggles and reward) lends to the correspondence of the concept of ἄθλον (“reward”) in the biblical theology of martyrdom (21). Metaphorically the prize may be virtue rather than money. Thus Judaism struggled for its religious and cultural identity against this backdrop in Maccabees, and indeed in 1 Maccabees we learn that the Hellenizing chief priest Jason had set up a gymnasium in Jerusalem promoting sports and education in the Greek style.

Katell Berthelot’s “The Notion of Anathema in Ancient Jewish Literature Written in Greek” examines the “semantic evolution” of the word ἀνάθεμα (ἀνάθημα, v. ἀναθηματίζω) in the Jewish Greek Scriptures and in Jewish Greek literature outside the LXX. Specifically, she considers the conquest narratives in Deuteronomy that refer to the expulsion of the Canaanites and those texts outside of Deuteronomy that refer to their annihilation, or “ban” (חרם) (35–36). Berthelot surveys the use of ἀναθηματα (often used in collocation with ἀνατίθημι) in the Greek world. An ἀνάθεμα was an object, territory, or individual who was “irrevocably dedicated to one or several god(s), without the donor’s ever being able to retrieve the consecrated item” (40). Unlike normative Greek usage, the meaning
ἀνάθεμα (var. ἀνάθημα) in the translated LXX, rendering לְדֹּאָב (also often in collocation with לְדֹּאָב > ἀνατίθημι), is partly “invented by the translator” (41); some instances pertain to the destruction of something apart from any consecrating or sacrificial nuance and, more surprisingly, designate something or someone who is “abominable to God and must be utterly destroyed” (44). In these cases it “has become a semantic neologism” or a semantic Hebraism (46), and this understanding was transferred into the New Testament, where it evolved yet further in terms of a “curse” or “cursed person to be doomed” (50–51). In compositional Greek Jewish literature beyond 1 Maccabees, however, authors evidently did not adopt the “neologisms invented by the authors of the Septuagint” (46) but confirm and resume the Classical Greek meaning.

In “The Noun βοηθός as a Divine Title,” Eberhard Bons notes the common language of God as βοηθός (adiutor) “helper” in early Christian prayer language, while pointing out that βοηθός is a hapax in the New Testament (54–55). He surveys pagan Greek literature, the papyri, and the Septuagint in order to determine the origin of the noun βοηθός as a title for deity in prayer. No examples of βοηθός applied to deity were found in the Greek prayer texts, but there are examples in military texts and numerous texts of Hellenistic and Roman times, albeit not clearly in a prayer context or formula (57–59). In the Egyptian documentary papyri there are scant examples (e.g., the Egyptian god Sarapis), but again none that suggest that later Christian prayers were influenced. Numerous examples are presented in which a human petitioned another human (king) as βοηθός, which Bons argues shows a kind of Sitz im Leben in petitions (61). In contrast, God as βοηθός (usually rendering the root עזר) is common in the LXX, with most references in the Psalter. In these, βοηθός is reserved as a title for only God (63), and this may have been motivated by the use of βοηθός in the Pentateuch (e.g., Exod 18:4) and secondarily by its use in the petitions of the Egyptian papyri (65–66).

In “Die Bedeutung von διαθήκη im Hebräerbrie,” Wolfgang Kraus examines the meaning and significance of διαθήκη in Hebrews, given its prevalence in this book (17x) over against the rest of the New Testament (16x). Initially surveying previous explanations of διαθήκη (so Backhaus, Vogel, Fuhrmann), especially in the framework of a covenant theology, Kraus questions whether one can assume the notion of ברית on διαθήκη or place it semantically within its common Hellenistic sense (see especially other terms διαθήκη renders in Sirach, such as וַיה, that do not mean “covenant”). For Kraus, the notion of “God’s covenant” (so Backhaus) in 9:16ff. is an overinterpretation. Rather, the soteriological work of Jesus in Hebrews is not dictated by a “covenant theology” nor as a polemic against the Jews (though it may have been used as such in its reception history) but by the prophetic application perceived in various Old Testament texts (e.g., Jer 38[31], Ps 109[110], etc.) with respect to legitimizing Jesus as high priest opposite the old Levitical order.
Jörg Frey’s “The Use of δόξα in Paul and John as Shaped by the Septuagint” examines the LXX background and usage of δόξα and its influence upon Paul and the Fourth Gospel (85). Against the background of Classical Greek usage with meanings such as “expectation” or “opinion” and secondarily “good repute,” the LXX translators chose a limited range of meaning with δόξα (rendering כבוד) in connection with God’s splendor or “glory” (86), and this limitation as found also in the New Testament essentially strained out the Classical nuances altogether. To determine why δόξα would render כבוד in this way, Frey uses a novel method that looks to the first books translated in the LXX (assuming the Pentateuch), followed by the Prophets and others (87). Frey’s survey of δόξα (for כבוד) in the Pentateuch shows that it is used “most distinctively for the glorious appearance of God in his revelation at Mount Sinai or in the tabernacle” and that this primary “new” meaning for δόξα seems to have prevailed in the later books of the LXX and compositional Greek (88–89). For Frey, the innovation in semantic meaning stems from its initial usage in Genesis, from where it spread out to Exodus and beyond (90). Next Frey shows the prevalence of δόξα in Greek Isaiah and its association with salvation and eschatological revelation and how this connection from LXX Isaiah was likely instrumental to its use in the New Testament. This is especially so in Paul’s theocentric use (94–97) and John’s christological use (97–103), though not in the writings of Josephus or Philo, where the Classical meanings prevail (93).

In “Mixed Blessings: The Biblical Notion of Blessing in the Works of Philo and Flavius Josephus,” Jan Joosten looks at how the language of blessing in the Septuagint reflects a “two-way acculturation” of meaning. In one sense, the “Hebrew Bible was undeniably Hellenized” when translated, and the “Greek language was ‘Hebraized’” (106), and כבר > εὐλογέω is the used to explore this semantic shift. In nonbiblical (Classical) Greek εὐλογέω means “to praise, commend,” and in a religious setting of the Hellenistic period it is applied to praising a god (107). In the Septuagint εὐλογέω is rarely used for commendation but occurs with great frequency in the nonbiblical Hellenistic sense of “to praise God.” In other cases, however, εὐλογέω takes on a “decidedly un-Greek” nuance when God is the subject and people or creatures are the object (108), meaning “to bless.” This, Joosten contends, likely arose from the declarative use of כבר in prayer language in which a person “blesses” God (i.e., declares God to be a source of blessing). Since this cannot be easily expressed in Greek, εὐλογέω seems defensible, and once the lexical connection had been made, it was made “constantly” throughout the LXX irrespective of whether its semantic meaning worked in context (109). By looking beyond the LXX to other Jewish and Christian writings, it is confirmed “that the Greek verb has really been given a new meaning” (110). Considering the dearth of Jewish Hellenistic authors, Joosten turns to the writings of Philo and Josephus to see if εὐλογέω carries the dual meaning of “praise” and “bless” established by the LXX. In Philo both nuances are found,
but Joosten concludes that with the latter meaning Philo “re-Hellenizes” this verb in special ways (112). Josephus uses εὐλογέω in the sense of “blessing” rarely, but instead possibly appeals to his Greek and Roman readers with the more normative Greek meaning (“praise”) even to the point of transforming his text to accommodate that usage (114).

Emanuela Prinzivalli’s contribution, “The Use of ὁµόνοια and Related Terms in the Septuagint and in Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries,” begins with an examination of ὁµόνοια and φιλαδελφία in Christian writings up to the third century (117). Beginning in Classical and Hellenistic literature, ὁµόνοια pertains to mostly civil concord (see many examples in the Second Sophistic) but also family concord (117–19). In the LXX δμον- tends to be used generically, but examples (including the verb δμονοέω) in Sirach and 4 Maccabees emphasize, along with the extrabiblical authors of the Hellenistic era, “the significance of ὁµόνοια as the most important virtue for human coexistence” yet “framed in the particular conception of God, who is the source of a just law system” (121). Prinzivalli next considers near synonymous words for peace in 1 Clement and Ignatius of Antioch. In 1 Clement ὁµόνοια and εἰρήνη form a common hendiadys (124). Early Christian writings tended to “readapt” the Classical/Hellenistic meaning of civil concord to represent concord in the church (127). Prinzivalli’s discussion ends with a very brief statement about φιλαδελφία and ἀδελφότης, but it is not clear to me how these are meant to relate to the discussion of ὁµόνοια, since no details about the usage of these latter words are provided.

In “La Septante dans quelques testimonia non canoniques des origines chrétiennes,” Enrico Norelli explores the vocabulary of the LXX with respect to the genre of testimony. Specifically, Norelli looks at testimonia agrapha, or noncanonical texts that connect Old Testament prophecy (via LXX quotation/allusion) with the events/sayings of Jesus or the first generation of those who believed in him. Determining the relationship of these testimonies to the Septuagint ends up being a complex textual problem, since they generally display many textual differences with Septuagint and many are an admixture of biblical text with freshly composed sayings. Furthermore, it is argued that testimonies were often circulated in small collections and possibly extracted as collections from sources now lost. Norelli limits his discussion to three examples from Clement’s letter to Rome and delves deeply into an exploration to locate possible LXX influences in the examples. He examines 1 Clem. 26:2, pertaining to the resurrection of Christ, and concludes that Clement reproduced an existing collection of testimonies. Next Norelli examines 1 Clem. 29:3 and questions whether a quotation from LXX-Deut 32:8–9 and 4:34 and Ezek 48 regarding the identity of the people of God (i.e., Israel) is not to be taken in the new context as the community of believers in Jesus. Norelli’s third example, 1 Clem. 8:2–3, which pertains to repentance, is beleaguered with difficulties in determining the
source text(s). Norelli rejects the claim of an apocryphal Ezekiel (as widely proposed by some scholars) as a source after engaging in a complex comparative analysis of shared textual material in writings of Clement of Alexandria (1 Clem. 8:2–3, Quis dives Salvetur 39.4, Paedagogus 1.91.2) and from Nag Hammadi (Exegesis on the Soul 135.30–136.4), along with numerous LXX citations.

In “Eine Grammatik der Septuaginta und des Neuen Testaments: Methodische Überlegungen zu Grenzen und Möglichkeiten,” Thomas Kraus raises fundamental questions related to the task and justifiability of writing a grammar for the Septuagint and the New Testament. In his survey of earlier attempts to write grammars of the LXX (e.g., Conybeare and Stock, Thackeray, Helbing, Abel), he concludes that all are incomplete and out of date (165). While the state of New Testament grammars is in better shape, Kraus questions whether a grammar really can account for the linguistic diversity among the various parts of the New Testament (cf. Mark and Revelation) or for the great differences in syntax and sentence structure found. How does a grammar account for the idiosyncrasies of individual authors and find common ground among all the texts of the New Testament while simultaneously situating all of these within the context, linguistic history, and development of the language? Kraus notes the difficulty in describing and accounting for the barrier between syntax and style (169) in a grammar. Since the “style” of language influences syntactical choice and vice versa, syntax and semantics are closely related. Thus it becomes problematic to explain what a treatment on the New Testament and LXX with exclusive interest on grammar would entail. Following a discussion of the Septuagint and New Testament in a linguistic historical context and the difficulty of understanding these within a continuum of language development, Kraus looks specifically at the example of εν (+ dat.) and instrumental ב in terms of its linguistic development in the LXX and New Testament.

In James Aitken’s concluding remarks, “Outlook,” the two foci prevalent in this volume are recounted: (1) the reception of LXX words in the reception history, including the New Testament and later Christian writings, and (2) their linguistic background, in which LXX words are examined within the broader context of the Greek language (183). Aitken highlights the confusion and difficulty of classifying the linguistic register (popular, literary, etc.) since a single genre can contain multiple registers (188) and that the study of both the papyri and epigraphic evidence has slowly made methodological advancements, although the inscriptions have been accounted for less than literary sources (190), and thus the epigraphic sources in this volume are a welcomed development.

This volume should be commended for broaching such an ambitious, interdisciplinary effort and with highly competent researchers. While there is little continuity from one essay to the next aside from the more general stated goals of the HTLS, as would be
expected in the situation of a workshop, each study is a worthy contribution not to be missed by anyone interested in the historical and theological development of the Bible.