

Georg. A. Walser, *Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews: Studies in Their Textual and Contextual Background* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 356) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013). Pp xiv + 220. € 74. ISBN 978-3-16-152740-1

ARTUR MALINA

Faculty of Theology, University of Silesia in Katowice
e-mail: malina@naos.pl
ORCID: 0000-0003-4961-2254

The reviewed book is a slightly revised version of the doctoral thesis presented to the University of Leicester in August 2012. Within the last two decades, extensive works concerning the use of OT texts in the Letter to the Hebrews have been published. The reviewed monograph includes some of them: R. Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint in Hebrews: An Investigation of Its Influence with Special Consideration to the Use of Hab 2:3-4 in Heb 10:37-38* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 160) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2003); S.E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews. A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 260) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2009); G.J. Steyn, *A Quest for the Assumed LXX Vorlage of the Explicit Quotations in Hebrews* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 235) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2011). After the appearance of Walser's book, another work, namely B.J. Whitfield, *Joshua Traditions and the Argument of Hebrews 3 and 4* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 194) (Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter 2013), concerning the use of texts from one part of Hebrews, has been published. Focus on this theme corresponds to special relationships between the Letter to the Hebrews and the first part of the Bible: among the books of the second part the theme has one of the highest number of references to the first part.

The monograph consists of five chapters. Chapter One is devoted to preliminary issues: basic assumptions, the definition of aims, the evaluation of the state of research, the overview of methodology, in particular, the justification for the selection of three OT texts from among numerous quotations in Hebrews, as well as a brief presentation of the structure of this letter. The next three chapters, which form the main part of the work, delve into the selected texts according to a fixed pattern. In the first stage, various versions of the quotations are examined

and compared in the main sources: the Masoretic text and the Septuagint. In the same subsection, the context of these texts is analysed in the two language versions of the Old Testament, and in the Letter to the Hebrews.

The biggest part of each chapter is the discussion of the interpretations of the quotations, which are found in the sources of ancient Judaism and early Christianity. The work includes all sources dated up to the 5th century: in Qumran, the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Targum, other New Testament fragments, Midrash as well as Greek and Latin Christian writings. The final chapter contains general conclusions that are divided into an overview of the conclusions of the three analytic chapters and general comments on the use of the Old Testament in the New, with particular emphasis on the transmission of texts and their interpretation in the currents of ancient Judaism and early Christianity – the ‘Parting of the Ways.’

Reading the first chapter allows us to appreciate both the originality of the discussion of the sources and some of its limitations, which result from the adopted aims, methodology and assumptions. The aims of the study are set out in four research questions that are based on two fundamental assumptions: several versions of the Old Testament text existed when Hebrews was composed, and that these versions were interpreted in the context where Hebrews was composed. The first two questions relate to the Old Testament text: Which versions of the quoted texts existed during the composition of the book? Which version of the OT was used by the author of Hebrews? This definition of the aims does not mean investigating only the use of a particular version, but is linked to the question about the origin and prehistory of the quoted text (p. 6). Two further questions concern the context: How did the different versions of the text influence the understanding of its meaning? What is the relationship between the OT text and its explanation in the Letter to the Hebrews? Answers to these questions are to show that the book does not assign entirely new meanings to the quoted texts, but it refers to the interpretation of those passages already known in the time of its author.

Three quotations from the three main parts of the Hebrew Bible: Torah, Prophets and Writings are then analysed. Two of them appear in the second part of the Letter to the Hebrews: Jer 31:33 [= LXX 38:33] in Heb 8:10; Ps 40:7 [= LXX 39:7] in Heb 10:5. Concentrating on only three texts was justified by the limited scope of the dissertation. Analysing other quotations (especially, those from Heb 1:6 and 2:7) would not allow the author to conduct their analysis in a sufficiently thorough way (p. 24).

Although the first two quotations are found – as Georg. A. Walser writes – in a more Christological part of the Letter, they differ from each other in the same context: the first has not received a separate interpretation from the author of

the letter, while the other bears his commentary. The choice of the differently used texts corresponds to one of the aims of the work, which is to examine the relationships between different versions and their context-dependent interpretations. Juxtaposing these two quotations, differently used, makes it possible to distinguish between the subsequent meaning given to the first text depending on the further development of Christology and the sense already attributed to the second text by the Letter to the Hebrews. In the centuries that followed, the meaning of the OT text could have been determined by the interpretation found in the letter, which led to its departure from the sense derived from that text by rabbinical exegesis.

The meaning of the third quotation (Gen 47:31 in Heb 11:21) seems to be less dependent on the meaning assumed in the context of the Letter to the Hebrews. This text is quoted outside the central part of the letter, which has a Christological emphasis, and does not bear any explanation from the author. Thus, it can be expected that in the circles of ancient Judaism and early Christianity, this citation was similarly interpreted.

The analysis of the first text, namely the announcement of the new covenant (Jer 31:33 [= LXX 38:33] in Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16), confirms the existence of two versions before the creation of the Letter to the Hebrews. In the Masoretic text, the noun occurs in the singular 'my law' (*tôrāî*), while the Septuagint, followed by Hebrews, has a plural term 'my laws' (*nomous mou*). In the New Testament, these are the only two cases in which the word is used in the plural. A detailed review of references to the quoted prophesy in the ancient writings of Judaism and Christianity confirms the difference that could be expected: the sources of Judaism have a singular variant, while Christian documents contain a lesson in the plural as well. The testimony of the second circle shows that the concept of the law and the laws in the new covenant was commonly identified with the teaching of Jesus. This interpretation is not yet present in these fragments of Hebrews. Its author neither comments on the quoted text nor uses a plural noun in other places; the term in the singular refers to the Mosaic law. Therefore, Walser suggests that the plural, which is found in the Greek version of the Old Testament, could have promoted the interpretation of the prophetic text by Christian writers as a reality that goes beyond the Torah itself (p. 89).

However, at this place, it is worth focusing on the New Testament texts which must have influenced the subsequent Christian concept, not limited to the law of Moses: *a law of faith* (Rom 3:27); *the law of the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus* (Rom 8:2); *being [...] within law of Christ* (1 Cor 9:21); *the law of the Christ* (Gal 6:2); *a perfect law* (Jam 1:25). Unfortunately, the significance of these texts is not taken into account in Walser's discussion of the origin of the interpretation of the mention of the law in the text of Jeremiah, given by Christian writers.

The analysis of the second text (Ps 40:7 [= LXX 39:7] in Hebrews 10:5) leads to the analogous statement that there were two versions while the letter was being composed. The first depicts the action of God who enables the psalmist to obey his will, 'you have dug ears for me.' The second is confirmed by Papyrus Bodmer 24, together with the majuscule codes \aleph , B, A, 'a body you have prepared for me.' The second lesson, present in Greek translations and in Hebrews, does not have any variant in the Hebrew manuscripts that would confirm the existence of the Hebrew *Vorlage*. Together with most contemporary biblical scholars, Walser claims that for the author of the text it was improbable to change the text in order to adapt it to his own Christological argument. His comment must have been based on the variant with the noun 'body,' already present in the Old Testament text quoted by him. This reading is attested by the aforementioned significant Greek manuscripts: prehexapleric papyri and the three leading majuscule codices. On the other hand, the lesson 'you shaped my ears,' which was adopted in the 1930s in Alfred Rahlfs' Septuagint, is an obvious attempt to harmonize it with the Hebrew text.

The third text describes Jacob's action which follows the blessing of Joseph's sons, 'and bowed low to the tip of his staff' (Gen 47:31 in Hebrews 11:21). The descriptions of the place of its appearance as a hortatory part of the letter and as a context without any explicit reference to Jesus are not appropriate (p. 27). In the entire 11th chapter of the letter there are no direct and simultaneous references to its author and addressees, which are typical of parenetic fragments (the exceptions are 11:3: 'we understand' and 11:40: 'for us, so that without us,' which, however, do not have a hortatory or encouraging form. In the same chapter, relatively close to the quotation, there are at least two obvious references to Christ. The author speaks of Isaac as a type of Jesus risen from the dead (11:19), and characterises the solidarity of Moses with the oppressed Israelites as proof of his consideration of the reproach of Christ as having greater value than the treasures of Egypt (11:26). The author of the letter, quoting the Book of Genesis, follows the Septuagint, which is different from the Masoretic text, 'bowed himself on the head of his bed.'

In both cases, the vague meaning of the sentence favoured different interpretations in the two major circles of the interpretation of the text: ancient Judaism and early Christianity, and by referring it to different contexts. It is a pity that the overview of the reception of this mention concerning the patriarch's staff does not take into account other indications of this object since the author of the letter may have had in mind the beginning of the wandering of this patriarch. Jacob, facing the threat posed by Esau, invokes the help of God, reminding him of his constant care as evidenced by the difference between what he experienced at the beginning of his wanderings and what he had before meeting his elder

brother, 'I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps' (Gen 32:11). Both mentions of the staff provide a clear framework for the image of Jacob, who for the rest of his life remains a wanderer and does not attain the proper purpose of his journey, which matches the meaning of the verb 'dying' (*teleutōn*), which at the beginning of the next verse depicts Joseph's death as the end of his life.

In the study of three texts, Georg. A. Walser is aware of the limitations of the method he has adopted because of the state of the sources. Although his numerous testimonies of the reception of the quotations may indicate that during the composition of the Letter to the Hebrews its author may have had at his disposal various versions of these texts and may have encountered their different interpretations; however, these examples do not confirm in any case that he factually chose between different versions or their explanations.

In the first chapter, Walser admits that the material available is 'very scarce.' Unfortunately, he does not draw proper conclusions from the fact that taking into account the subsequent transmission of texts and the ancient commentaries referring to them does not change this state of affairs. It is still not possible to determine the actual conditions of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews concerning the variants of the texts from which he chose or the interpretations available which influenced it. The correct statement about the coupling between the text and context, which must also have taken place during the period unattested by the sources, does not allow us to proceed to reconstructing the relationship between the versions of the text and their interpretations during the composition of the Letter to the Hebrews. One should seek the value of the work somewhere else. Walser's study throws much light on numerous examples of both the reception of Old Testament texts and their interpretations in Judaism and Christianity in the first centuries. This is due to the selection of the sources based on Walser's solid erudition, and thanks to his analysis of the sources conducted with remarkable diligence. In this regard, Walser's study is to be highly recommended.