

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE RELIGION OF THE SEPTUAGINT AND HELLENISM

a) *Introduction*

The theology of the LXX as a stage of the religious history of Israel, and in relation to the religion of Hellenism, is a chapter that has not yet been examined in a systematic way. There is no reference to it in the manuals by Swete and Jellicoe. And it is only mentioned in passing in the classics by Frankel, Bousset and Gressmann, Nickelsburg or in the recent introduction to the LXX by the French team and other publications.¹ However, recently and in various contexts it has been mentioned as one of the most pressing tasks of Septuagintal research.

The topic has two clearly differentiated aspects:

1. On the one hand the study of the theology and exegesis of the LXX as an important moment in the history of Judaism and of the Hebrew Bible.² From this aspect the problem of whether or not an Alexandrian interpretation and an Alexandrian canon for the Hellenistic Jews of the diaspora existed, against the Palestinian canon and interpretation, is particularly important.

2. The influence of Hellenistic thought on the LXX, i.e. the degree of Hellenisation that the Hebrew Bible underwent in being translated into Greek as a concrete expression of a more complex phenomenon, which is the Hellenisation of the whole Middle East after the conquests by Alexander.

They are two points of view from the same approach, which considers the LXX to be the main manifestation of Hellenistic Judaism, and places the emphasis less on the textual stage it reflects than

¹ Z. Frankel, *Vorstudien zu der Septuaginta*, Leipzig 1841, and Frankel, *Über den Einfluss der palästinischen Exegese auf die alexandrinische Hermeneutik*, Leipzig 1851; W. Bousset and H. Gressmann, *Die Religion des Judentums*; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, Cambridge, Mass.-London 1972; M. Harl *et al.*, *La Bible grecque des Septante*, and M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemmer, *Die Septuaginta*.

² See. D. Barthélemy, "L'ancien Testament a mûri à Alexandrie", *TZ* 21 (1965), 358-70, and R. Hanhart, "Die Bedeutung der Septuagintaforschung", 63-64.

on the historical updating and religious thought reflected by the translation.

From the beginning of our century the idea spread, brilliantly formulated by A. Deissmann, that the LXX essentially embodied the Hellenisation of Jewish monotheism.³ From then on only generic articles have appeared on the topic, such as those by Bertram, or oversimplifications, like those by Dodd,⁴ which by over-generalisation emphasise the opposition between Semitic and Greek thought. The truth is that most of the articles of the theological dictionary of the New Testament edited by Kittel have a section on the LXX. However, the most significant contributions in this field, marking the path to follow in later research, lie in the sporadic commentaries we have on any book of the LXX as an independent literary work, such as the one by Seeligmann on Isaiah or those by Gerleman on Proverbs, Job or Chronicles.⁵ They are an indication of the enormous possibilities provided, especially in certain books, by a philological and exegetical commentary on the LXX.

From the 1950s, several works began to appear on the redaction and theology of the LXX – not only on text criticism – in connection with translation techniques. However, before examining the influence of Hellenism on the Greek translation of the Bible, we shall briefly describe the cultural and religious background of Judaism in the Hellenistic period.

b) *The Hellenisation of the Jews*

The two concepts that determine the evolution of Greek religion in the Hellenistic period are Euhemerism and Theocracy. After Alexander's conquest, supplantation of cult and the *interpretatio graeca* of foreign deities also reached Palestine. In most cases the new emperors gave Greek names to ancient Semitic divinities: Ashtarte of Ashkelon became Aphrodite Urania; Ba'al of Carmel became Zeus, the Ba'al of Tabor, Zeus Atabirios, Phoenician Resheph, Apollo, and Melqart, Heracles. The cult of Dionysus became amazingly popular.⁶

³ A. Deissmann, "Die Hellenisierung des semitischen Monotheismus", *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum*, (1903), 161–77.

⁴ See Select Bibliography.

⁵ See Select Bibliography.

⁶ See "Ba'al" in *RAC* I, 1066–101; M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, 473–86,

However, it has to be stressed that before the arrival of Christianity, no Greek-Roman author was seriously concerned with the religion of Israel as it could be read in Greek from the 3rd century BCE in the LXX. Instead they criticised Jewish religion as *superstitio barbara*, even though, before anti-Semitism arose in Egypt, the Jewish people were considered to be a respectable race of philosophers, whose concept of God was usually equated with the monotheism of Stoic philosophy.⁷

Among educated Greeks of the Hellenistic period there was an increasing trend towards a universal piety in which the various religions were interpreted as manifestations of a single deity. Greek philosophy interested in religion was moving towards monotheism, as is evident in the Stoics, the Orphic groups and other philosophical movements. These circles soon aroused interest in the Jewish groups in Egypt and we have the example of Aristobulus and Artapanus who converted to Orpheus in witness to the Mosaic truth.

The tendency to equate the Jewish and Greek concepts of God is not only attested among the soldiers of a garrison in Upper Egypt (two Jewish inscriptions from a temple of Pan) but even in the learned circles that produced the *Letter of Aristeas*. The author of that letter explains to king Ptolemy this universal image of the Jewish God in the following words: . . . τὸν γὰρ πάντων ἐπόπτην καὶ κτίστην θεὸν οὗτοι σέβονται, ὃν καὶ πάντες, ἡμεῖς δέ, βασιλεῦ, προσονομάζοντες ἑτέρως Ζῆνα καὶ Δία ("They worship the creator of all things, who sees everything, the same one we all worship; except that we, Oh king, call them differently *Zeus* and *Dia*").⁸ In Hellenistic society, therefore, Judaism is portrayed as a true philosophy of ethical monotheism.

and the thoughtful review of this book by A. Momigliano in *JTS* 21 (1970), 149-53. In ancient writers, Yahweh/Yao is often the equivalent of Dionysius. On the syncretistic union of Yao with pagan gods in the popular religion of the magical papyri, see N. Fernández Marcos, "Motivos judíos en los papiros mágicos griegos", *Religión, superstición y magia en el mundo romano*, ed. J. Lomas, Cadiz 1985, 101-30. On the cult of Dionysius at Beth Shean and the possible origin of this identification, cf. D. Flusser, "Paganism in Palestine", *The Jewish People in the First Century II*, eds. S. Safrai and M. Stern, Assen 1976, 1065-100, pp. 1068 and 1084.

⁷ See N. Fernández Marcos, "Interpretaciones helenísticas del pasado de Israel", 175-77; A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 91-96, and G. Dellling, "Die Begegnung zwischen Hellenismus und Judentum".

⁸ *Letter of Pseudo-Aristeas* 16, see A. Pelletier, *Lettre d'Aristée à Philocrate*, Paris 1962, 110; G. Dellling, "Die Begegnung zwischen Hellenismus und Judentum", 10, and Y. Amir, "Die Begegnung des biblischen und des philosophischen Monotheismus als Grundthema des jüdischen Hellenismus", *Evangelische Theologie* 38 (1978), 2-19.

However, this was not the predominant attitude in Judaism in respect of the images of God in the Greek cult. The negative trend of resistance to Hellenisation was much stronger, although even in this reaction they used the Hellenistic forms of criticism of religion, such as Euhemerism.⁹ This attitude of resisting Hellenism and even of political and social separation from the Greeks is found in varying degrees both in Palestine and in the diaspora, in such diverse writers as the anonymous Samaritan, the Jewish Sibyll (*c.* 140 BCE), Artapanus, Philo, Josephus or the author of the 3rd book of Maccabees.¹⁰

These forms of criticism of religion as well as the equation of the gods of the philosophers with the god of the Bible were later adopted by Christian apologists.

The refusal by most of the Jewish people, even in the diaspora, to allow the names and images of non-Jewish deities to be transferred to the God of Israel – together with the withdrawal and gradual concealment of the original name of God, Yahweh/Yao – had a strange result:¹¹ since the abstract generic term used to name him in the Greek world – partly as *κύριος*, which initially had no religious meaning, or else as *θεός* – was too innocuous and depersonalised in Greek, the view spread that the god of the Jews could not be named, which indicated depravity. Apparently, against this portrayal by Greek and Roman writers, the Jews made virtue out of necessity and approved it to spread the idea that the true God had to be nameless.¹² The final consequence of this reduction, which also affected the early Christians, was the reproach of atheism which they had to bear.¹³

⁹ See K. Thraede, "Euhemerismus" in *RAC*. R. Hanhart interprets the LXX translation as a reaction against Hellenism, not as a model of assimilation as Deissmann thought. The translation of the Bible into Greek is the means by which the Judaism of the diaspora defends itself against Hellenism, taking the war to its own land, in the same way that Palestine reacted by producing apocalyptic literature, see R. Hanhart, "Zum Wesen der makedonisch-hellenistischen Zeit Israels", *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch I*, 49–59, p. 56.

¹⁰ See A. Paul, "Le Troisième livre des Maccabées", *ANRW* II, 20.1, 298–336, pp. 331–33.

¹¹ W. Bousset and H. Gressmann, *Die Religion des Judentums*, 202–20: "Verschwinden des Yahvehnamens".

¹² E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos. Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte religiöser Rede*, Stuttgart 1956, 52–62 and 115–24.

¹³ The problem of assimilative theocracy not only emerged in the diaspora. In *Antiquities*, 12,261, Josephus alludes to a Samaritan temple without a name (*τὸ ἄνόνημον ἱερόν*) in the letter from the Samaritan community to Antiochus IV (166 BCE).

The absence of images in the religion of Israel arouses the idea of *pantheism* in Greek and Roman writers, as can be seen in the preserved fragments of Hecate, Strabo and Dio Cassius.¹⁴ Also to be noted is the assimilation of Yahweh (Ἰαώ in some transcriptions into Greek) to Dionysus, especially in the treatise *Τίς ὁ παρ' Ἰουδαίους θεός* by Plutarch of Querouca.¹⁵

The reasons for equating Dionysus with the god of the Hebrews are:

1. their greatest feast, *Tabernacles*, is celebrated at a time and a manner that are like the feasts of Dionysus;
2. they also have another feast in which they carry branches of fig and thyrsos, play the harp and trumpet in the manner of bacchanals;

And in Jerusalem the problem arose during the attempted reform by the Hellenistic Jews (175–163 BCE) of assimilation between the God of Zion and the images of god of the surrounding Greek and Oriental world.

¹⁴ See M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 11,4: ἀγάλμα δὲ θεῶν τὸ σύνολον οὐ κατεσκεύασε διὰ τὸ μὴ νομίζειν ἀνθρωπομόρφον εἶναι τὸν θεόν, ἀλλὰ τὸν περιέχοντα τὴν γῆν οὐρανὸν μόνον εἶναι θεὸν καὶ τῶν ὅλων κύριον (“It had absolutely no image of God so as to think that the deity does not have a human form but that the only god and lord of all things is the sky which surrounds the earth”).

Strabo reacted against the Egyptian worship of animals, countering it with the pantheistic interpretation of the Jewish religion, induced perhaps by the absence of God's name in the LXX and by the ban of images in Israel, see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 115,35: ἔφη γὰρ ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἐδίδασκεν, ὡς οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονοῖεν οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι θηρίους εἰ κάζοντες καὶ βοσκήμασι τὸ θεῖον οὐδ' οἱ Λίβυες· οὐκ εὖ δὲ οὐδ' οἱ Ἕλληνες, ἀνθρωπομόρφους τυποῦντες, εἶη γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ μόνον θεὸς τὸ περιέχον ἡμᾶς ἅπαντας καὶ γῆν καὶ θάλατταν, ὃ καλοῦμεν οὐρανὸν καὶ κόσμον καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄντων φύσιν (“Since he said and taught that neither the Egyptians nor the Libyans had the correct feelings in likening the divinity to wild animals and beasts; nor did the Greeks act well by sculpting them in human form. And that there was only one deity who contained us all and the land and the sea, whom we call sky and cosmos and the nature of beings”).

The same idea recurs in Dio Cassius (160–230 CE), see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors II*, 406,17.2: κεχωρίδαται δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνθρώπων ἕξ τε τὰλλα τὰ περὶ τὴν διαίταν πάνθ' ὡς εἰπεῖν, καὶ μάλιστα' ὅτι τῶν μὲν ἄλλων θεῶν οὐδένα τιμῶσιν, ἕνα δὲ τινα ἰσχυρῶς σέβουσιν. οὐδ' ἀγάλμα οὐδὲν <οὐδ'> ἐν αὐτοῖς ποτε τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις ἔσχον, ἄρρητον δὲ δὴ καὶ ἀειδῆ αὐτὸν νομίζοντες εἶναι περισσώτατα ἀνθρώπων θρησκεύουσι (“They are separated from other men in everything related to the form of life, so to say, and especially in their not worshipping any of the other gods, but instead they worship one intensely. They never had at that time any image in Jerusalem itself, for they think that he is ineffable and has no shape and is above men and they worship him”), see N. Fernández Marcos, “La religión judía vista por los autores griegos y latinos”.

¹⁵ A historian who lived from 46 to 120 CE, see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 258. The ancient Thracian–Phrygian god Sabazius, already assimilated to Dionysus or Zeus, came to be identified with Yahweh Sabaoth, god of the Jews, κύριος Sabazius or κύριος Sabaoth of the LXX, see F. Blanchetière, “Juifs et non Juifs”.

3. even the Sabbath festival is not foreign to the cult of Dionysus, since many call the Bacchantes σαβοί or Sabazius's initiates.
4. the high priest wears many little bells which tinkle as he walks with a sound as in nocturnal feasts to Bacchus.

Unfortunate as the assimilation of Yahweh to Bacchus may seem, it was greatly approved among the harmonists of the 1st century CE.¹⁶

Finally, a striking item of information in Strabo is the practice of incubation among the Jews.¹⁷ Certainly it is the only information we have that it was practised in the temple of Jerusalem. Nevertheless it merits better research in view of the many parallels Lieberman has discovered between the temple of Jerusalem and the pagan temples¹⁸ and taking into account recent archaeological discoveries about the existence of healing sanctuaries in Palestine and even in the very grounds of the *Aelia Capitolina*.¹⁹

¹⁶ For a discussion of the details, real or invented, in the paragraph from Plutarch, see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, pp. 559–62. For the description of the high priest with his solemn vestments, see Josephus, *Antiquities* III, 159ff.; *Jewish War* V, 230ff., and Ben Sira 50.

¹⁷ See M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 115, 35: ἐγκοιμάσθαι δὲ καὶ αὐτοὺς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων ἄλλους τοὺς εὐνοίετους· καὶ προσδοκᾶν δεῖν ἀγαθὸν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ δῶρον αἰεὶ τι καὶ σημεῖον τοὺς σωφρόνως ζῶντας καὶ μετὰ δικαιοσύνης, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους μὴ προσδοκᾶν (“and it was important to spend the night in the sanctuary to intercede for themselves and to have other warning dreams on behalf of others; and it is appropriate that those living prudently and uprightly expect good things from the deity, continually expect some gift or sign, although the others do not expect it”).

¹⁸ S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 164–79, “The Temple: Its Lay-out and Procedure”.

¹⁹ See A. Duprez, *Jésus et les dieux guérisseurs. À propos de Jean V*, Paris 1970, 85ff. On possible references to incubation in the Greek Bible, see N. Fernández Marcos, *Los ‘Thaumata’ de Sofronio. Contribución al estudio de la ‘Incubatio’ cristiana*, Madrid 1975, 24, n. 6. Perhaps in 1 Enoch 13:8 there is another allusion to the practice of incubation, or at least its formulae and technical terminology are preserved. Gnuse, instead, holds that Josephus is describing Jaddo's dream (*Antiquities* XI, 326–28) as an incubation dream, see R. Gnuse, “The Temple Experience of Jaddus in the ‘Antiquities’ of Josephus: A Report of Jewish Dream Incubation”, *JQR* 83 (1993), 349–68.

For the attitude of the Jews towards dreams in the post-biblical period see S. Zeilin, “Dreams and their Interpretation: From the Biblical Period to the Tannaitic Time. A Historical Study”, *JQR* 66 (1975), 1–18, and B. Stemberger, “Der Traum in der rabbinischen Literatur”, *Kairos* 18 (1976), 1–43, n. 2, where it is noted that they went to the pagan temples to practice incubation. The passage in Strabo on revelation through incubation has points in common with the view of Posidonius, but there is no conclusive proof of dependence on him, see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 265. Some specialists think that Strabo depended on a Jewish source, *ibid.* 266.

c) *The Hellenisation of the Septuagint*

Bertram has stated that the LXX translation could make some contribution to the recent debate on demythologisation. In the Greek Bible he sees a spiritualisation of the religion of Israel which demythologises the Old Testament in a process parallel to what happened in Hellenism with the mythology of Homer and Hesiod. Hellenistic critical philosophy puts the ancient Hellenistic pantheon to the test and the LXX shares this critical philosophy.²⁰

Bousset and Gressmann expounded the main novelties that the translation provided in the history of the religion of Israel. They consist in the Hellenisation of Jewish monotheism principally through the translation of God's names, the idea of the pre-existence of the Messiah and the presentation of a more developed eschatology which includes hope in an afterlife. Against the theocentrism of the Hebrew Bible, the LXX stands out for a predominance of anthropocentrism which emphasises the ethical attitude and the value of the individual.²¹ These conclusions can scarcely be maintained today without several modifications.

The simplification of the names of God is evident when we compare the range of expressions in Hebrew to denote the deity²² and the normal translation in the LXX using the common nouns *κύριος* and *θεός*. It is also evident in a tendency to remove any remnant of polytheism from the translation of God's names. The translators use circumlocutions to avoid the name of God, a tendency that would develop in late Judaism and in the rabbinic period. They translate *'elohim* as *ἄγγελοι* when it refers to the gods of the Canaanite pantheon and could cause difficulties if translated by *θεοί*. At other times, in the context of pagan deities, they intentionally translate the name of God as *ἄρχων* (Ez. 31:11), *παταρχον*²³ (Is. 37:38), *εἶδωλον*, *γλυπτός*, *βδέλυγμα*.²⁴

²⁰ G. Bertram, "Zur Bedeutung der Religion", and Bertram, "Vom Wesen der Septuaginta-Frömmigkeit", 275, n. 3.

²¹ W. Bousset and H. Gressman, *Die Religion des Judentums*, 264ff.

²² This range of expressions can be seen in F. Cantera and M. Iglesias, *Sagrada Biblia. Versión crítica sobre los textos hebreo, arameo y griego*, Madrid 1979. In this translation into Spanish, the variety of names in Hebrew for the names of God is followed so that this feature of the original is not lost; or see the recent French translation by A. Chouraqui, *La Bible*, Paris 1974-76.

²³ To denote the Assyrian god Nisrok. A tutelary god, who became *πάταρχων* in most manuscripts and a *hapax legomenon* in LSJ, see I. L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah*, 9-10.

²⁴ See C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, 3-24, especially p. 23.

Isaiah is a good example of how the translators chose the word εἰδωλον, which has a great Greek tradition, to denote pagan deities, whereas they reserve δαιμόνιον to denote demons who prowl around ruins (Is. 13:21 and 34:14).²⁵ It is something similar to what is observed in the Masoretic text when it replaces the name of *Baal* with *bošet* = “ignominy, shame” (e.g. in Hos. 9:10; Jer. 3:14 and 11:13); by means of this linguistic practice, the judgement of a strict monotheistic religion is expressed against pagan deities. In the first two passages where it occurs, the LXX translates it as αἰσχύνη; in the third as βαάλ. However, usually the LXX considers βαάλ to be feminine, the same gender as αἰσχύνη.

Similarly, in Dan. 12:11 τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως (*šiqqûs šomēm*) is an ignominious parody of *baal šamayîm*, the Ζεὺς Οὐράνιος.²⁶

The translators of the LXX, who always translate *sur* as πέτρα when not used metaphorically to mean God, in this last case completely avoid a literal translation, in case it was interpreted as an image of God.²⁷ The warrior god in Ex. 15:3 and Is. 42:13 (*ʿîl mîlhāmā*) becomes a God who destroys wars, συντριβὼν πολέμους; and the *wayîthallēk hʾnok ʾet hā-ʾelohîm* of Gen. 5:22 (“Enoch walked with *hā-ʾelohîm*”) is translated as εὐηρέστησεν δὲ Ἐνὼχ τῷ θεῷ (“Enoch pleased God”).

It seems that the debate about the anti-anthropomorphic tendency of the Greek translation has to be resolved in a non-uniform way due to the non-uniform treatment of the text, depending on the book and in connection with the translation technique of each.²⁸ In some

²⁵ See I. L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah*, 95–121: εἰδωλον, σκιά, ψεύδος, βδέλυγμα, χειροποιητόν, for *ʿelil* (*ibid.* 99). See also H. Kampel, “Sirenen in der LXX”, *BZ* 23 (1935), 158–65. Kampel thinks that σειρήνες (Is. 13:21; 34, 13 and 43:29) is used in the LXX to denote demons of death and that they had a place in the popular belief of Hellenistic Jews.

²⁶ C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, 23.

²⁷ See S. Olofsson, *God is my Rock*, Stockholm 1990, 35–45, p. 45: “The translator of the Book of Psalms always treated *sur* as a divine title differently from its literal and ordinary metaphorical meaning and the same is true of the translators of the other LXX books. A literal rendering of *sur* was consistently avoided when it referred to God.”

²⁸ See Select Bibliography. Gard, for example, notes how the image of Job given by the Greek translator is not the same as in Hebrew. The translator of Job-LXX avoids the questions that Job addresses to God, does not reprove him, and tends to emphasise Job’s humility in contrast to his presumptive character according to the Hebrew text. He also stresses Job’s trust in divine justice, see D. H. Gard, “The Concept of Job’s Character”. Similarly, in Gard’s opinion, Job-LXX has a more defined idea of the future life, an aspect missing from the Hebrew (Job 14:14), see D. H. Gard, “The Concept of the Future Life”.

books the translation is strongly anti-anthropomorphic in nature; in others it is not so clear. However it is not possible to make a global judgement about the theology of the LXX on this point. Bertram, Fritsch, Gerleman and Gard defend the anti-anthropomorphic tendency of the LXX in their studies on Qoheleth, the Pentateuch and Job, whereas Orlinsky insists, perhaps too much, that the anthropomorphic Hebrew terms are reproduced accurately in the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, as in Job and Isaiah.²⁹ And in his study on the book of Psalms, Soffer holds that this tendency does not have an important role in the translation since at times the terms in question are even translated more literally than necessary. Although in the translation of the psalms there must have been some models or exegetical exemplars, this anti-anthropomorphic tendency cannot be identified as one of them.

These nuances have to be extended to other concepts such as eschatology or messianism in the LXX. Lust concludes his study on messianism by stressing that the Greek Bible is not a single unit and as a result, each book or group of texts has to be studied separately.³⁰ However, recent monographs, such as the one by Schaper on Psalms or by Rösel on Genesis, recover an approach to the LXX that has proved to be fruitful since the studies by Z. Frankel in the previous century. They study it as an outstanding religious document, as the first Jewish interpretation known of the books in question and so as a source of historical and religious information for the exegesis and development of Jewish thought in the first three centuries before Christ. For ultimately, the LXX continues to be the main witness and first fruits of Jewish-Hellenistic thought.³¹

²⁹ H. M. Orlinsky, "Studies in the Septuagint of the Book of Job".

³⁰ J. Lust, "Messianism and Septuagint", 191: "At the present stage of the investigation we may conclude that the LXX certainly does not display a uniform picture of a developing royal messianism."

³¹ J. Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter*, 174-74, and M. Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung und Auslegung*, 247-54. Against the Hellenistic interpretation of Genesis proposed by Schmitt (see Select Bibliography), M. Görg develops the thesis of Egyptian influence previously suggested by S. Morenz ("Ägyptische Spuren in der LXX", *JAC Ergänzungsband I* [1964], 250-58). According to Görg, the Greek translation of the first chapters of Genesis shows contacts with Egyptian cosmogony and mythology; see M. Görg, "Ptolemäische Theologie in der Septuaginta". Certainly, contacts between the most famous Hellenistic Jews and Egyptian priests cannot be excluded, but no linguistic proofs are provided for such influences.

d) *The Formal Hellenisation of the Wisdom Writings*

In his monograph on the book of Proverbs, Gerleman discovers a series of Hellenising tendencies by the translator. Many passages are like an echo of literary Greek writers. He finds Homeric reminiscences in Prov. 30:19, καὶ τρίβους νηὸς ποντοπορούσης.³² Other passages contain reminiscences of Plato, such as Prov. 19:15, δειλία κατέχει ἀνδρογόναιον.³³ In Gen. 2:21, the Hebrew word *tardēmā* is used for the creation of the woman. However, the Greek translator, by association, has evoked not the biblical story of creation, but the account of Plato's Symposium (139/E).

The praise of the bee in Prov. 6:8*abc* has no equivalent in the Hebrew text; also it is unusual, as it goes against the attitude in the whole Old Testament which portrays the bee as an evil and dangerous species. Here, instead, the favourable and admiring attitude towards it probably comes from Greek writers: Aristotle calls it ἐργάτις as in this passage of Proverbs.³⁴ In Prov. 23:27, rather than Hebrew *kā-šūhā* "μουκά ζὼνᾶ" "for the whore is a deep pit",³⁵ the LXX translates and interprets πίθος γὰρ τετρημένος ἐστὶν ἀλλότριος οἶκος ("another person's house is a jar full of holes"), words that evoke Plato's Gorgias (493/B), where πίθος τετρημένος represents uncontrolled excess and licence, although the second part of the verse leads us to Xenophon, *Oec.* VII, 40, where the same image is applied to a house where everyone behaves like a stranger and no-one bothers about ordinary chores.³⁶

Perhaps Gerleman's conclusions require refining. To be specific, Cook considers that the Greek translation of Proverbs has to be dated to the beginning of the Hellenisation of Hellenistic-Jewish thought and it continued to retain, in Hellenistic guise, more Jewish

³² For the Hebrew *derek* ³⁰*nīyyā beleb-yām* (= "the path of the ship in the midst of the sea"), see G. Gerleman, *Studies of the Septuagint. III: Proverbs*, 28. Note the same position of the participle in the verse from Odyssey, XI,11: τῆς δὲ πανημερίας τέταθ' ἰστία ποντοπορούσης.

³³ For the Hebrew *ʿaslā taffil tardēmā* (= "laziness causes deep sleep"), see G. Gerleman, *Studies in the Septuagint. III: Proverbs*, 29.

³⁴ Aristoteles, *Natural History*, 627/A. The passage from Proverbs runs as follows: ἢ πορεύθητι πρὸς τὴν μέλισσαν καὶ μάθε ὡς ἐργάτις ἐστίν, τὴν τε ἐργασίαν ὡς σεμνὴν ποιεῖται ("or go to the bee and learn what kind of holy work it does"), see G. Gerleman, *Studies in the Septuagint. III: Proverbs*, 30–31.

³⁵ Unless the LXX reads *zarā* ("foreign woman") instead of *zonā*.

³⁶ G. Gerleman, *Studies in the Septuagint. III: Proverbs*, 33, and Gerleman, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*.

ideas than might appear.³⁷ However there is no doubt about the persistent evocations of Greek culture noted by Gerleman.

The translator of Proverbs was not the only one to be familiar with classical culture; it also applies to Job. The translator of Job tended to favour mythology and fable; by preference, the translator of Proverbs was inspired by poetry and philosophical literature.³⁸

In any case, it is not an easy task to define the degree of Hellenisation of a biblical book of the LXX, whether a translation or composed originally in Greek, because it is not always easy to distinguish accurately between what is the result of actual translation techniques, determined by the different structures of the two languages, and the changes due to the translator's theology. These echoes of the Greek world that Gerleman detects in Proverbs, and which in the translation often provoke departures from the original, are explained by Bertram, Baumgartner and Wevers by the midrashic procedure of interpretation and by appealing to similar phenomena in Aramaic translations.³⁹

In the books of the LXX that have no Hebrew *Vorlage*, the influence of Hellenism is more obvious, although it is difficult to check since so little of Hellenistic literature has survived. Wisdom is not written in Septuagintal style; 335 words of this book are missing from the vocabulary of the LXX. Its lexicon and style, instead, are very close to the features of philosophical and rhetorical prose of late Hellenism.⁴⁰ Even so, the author of Wisdom was familiar with the Jewish Bible and the popular traditions of his people. Probably by editing the book he was attempting to prepare educated Jewish students to live in Hellenistic society. In any case, it is Hellenism, and not the classical Greek period, which influenced the book of Wisdom. Its author knows the popular piety of Hellenistic Egypt, as shown by the vocabulary which is related to that of the aretalogies of Isis, the critical philosophy of religion, and the polemics against idolatry (Wisdom 13–15). He borrows technical terms used

³⁷ J. Cook, "Hellenistic Influence in the Septuagint Book of Proverbs".

³⁸ See N. Fernández Marcos, "The Septuagint Reading of the Book of Job". In the Greek translation of the Song of Songs, instead, there are scarcely any traces of the influence of the surrounding Greek and Roman culture, see N. Fernández Marcos, "La lectura helenística del Cantar".

³⁹ See N. Fernández Marcos, "Los estudios de 'Septuaginta'. Visión retrospectiva y problemática más reciente", *CFC* 11 (1976), 413–68, p. 434.

⁴⁰ J. M. Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and its Consequences*, Rome 1970, 153–62.

by the Epicureans to explain the immortality of the gods. However, his use of Hellenism is primarily strategic, to build a bridge between the inherited biblical faith and the current situation of his readers.

The author of Ben Sira, instead, in the praise of the ancestors (Sira 44–49) intends to write a panegyric of the heroes and wise men of Israel in the form of an *ἑγκώμιον*, matching the heroes and wise men of the Greeks, and he sets them up for his contemporaries as ideals of behaviour for the difficult current situation. It marks something new in Old Testament literature, influenced probably by Hellenism as to genre, as the use of typical characters was a favourite practice among Hellenistic Greek writers. It also tries to build a bridge between Greek culture and the traditions of the ancestors by writing a book following models of the Greek school and shaping his wisdom material in line with Stoic behaviour. However, in his book a tension is noticeable between assimilation of Hellenism and resistance to it.⁴¹

If we have noted a series of facts that is by no means exhaustive – both in the translated books of the LXX and in those originally composed in Greek – pointing to the influence of Hellenistic thought and forms, it should be made clear, contrary to one-sided attitudes in the past, that this Hellenisation of the LXX is no more than external. The gestation period of the LXX continues to represent one moment in the religion of Israel. What is most surprising about this stage of Judaism in the diaspora is that it preserves its monotheism intact. Thus, the importance of the LXX for the religion of Israel and for theology does not lie in what has filtered in from the spirit of the age when it was translated, but in what marks it as a link between the religion of the Old Testament in its original language on the one hand, and the witness of the New Testament on the other.⁴²

⁴¹ See Th. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, 33–34 and 173–74, and N. Fernández Marcos, “Interpretaciones helenísticas”, 164ff.

⁴² See R. Hanhart, “Die Bedeutung der Septuaginta für die Definition des ‘hellenistischen Judentums’”. It is risky to put too much emphasis on the distinction between Palestinian Judaism and the Judaism of the diaspora to the point of seeing a radical opposition between them that never existed. For both Paul and Philo, wisdom literature through the LXX is one of the strongest links with Greek thought: “Il n’est guère douteux par ailleurs que le christianisme, à partir du moment où il s’adresse aux Gentils, s’est en quelque sorte placé dans le sillage du judaïsme alexandrin,” state M. Simon and A. Benoît in *Le Judaïsme et le Christianisme antique*, Paris 1968, 244.

The few monographs on the religious lexicon of the LXX show how the Greek words penetrate new semantic fields, introduce neologisms and are concerned about a selective lexicon which, as far as possible, avoids evoking the practices of Greek religion. By this means they try to affirm and delimit what is specific and original to the religion of Israel as against the religions of the Mediterranean area.⁴³ This process of stating its novelty would be continued by early Christianity in the first two centuries, following – as in so many other fields (different *topoi* of apologetics, allegorical exegesis, etc.) – the example of Hellenistic Judaism.⁴⁴

However, this selective and peculiar nature of the religious vocabulary of the LXX must not be exaggerated, as happens sometimes in Kittel's *Lexicon of the New Testament*, in some entries on the use of certain words in Hellenistic Judaism.⁴⁵ In summary, the idea which was quite widespread until not many years ago, of the Greek moulding of Hebrew thought as a result of transferring a Semitic language to an Indo-European language, is no longer acceptable today. Two monographs have proved that both the binominations *nefes*/ψυχή and *tôrâ*/νόμος have the same semantic range and underwent the same development and transformation of meaning in Hebrew and in Greek.⁴⁶ More recent research has shown that it is not possible to make a division between Palestinian and Alexandrian Judaism. Both in Palestinian circles and in those of the diaspora, Hellenism was accepted and rejected to various extents and in various ways. Perhaps the most remarkable element to stand out in such complex circumstances is that, apart from a few well-known exceptions, allegiance to the Law and to the ancestral religion was maintained in a world of many fascinating cultures and religions.⁴⁷

⁴³ S. Daniel, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire du culte*, and J. A. L. Lee, *A Lexical Study of the Septuagint Version of the Pentateuch*. SCS 14, Chico, Calif. 1983.

⁴⁴ See N. Fernández Marcos, "En torno al estudio del griego de los cristianos", *Emerita* 41 (1973), 45–56.

⁴⁵ See J. Barr's remarks in *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, Oxford 1961, 282–87: "Detached Note on the non-use of certain words in the Greek Bible".

⁴⁶ N. P. Bratsiotis, "*Nepheš-psyché*", and L. M. Pasinya, *La notion de νόμος*. In these studies, which are somewhat philological, there is an obvious reaction against the inappropriate generalisations of T. Boman, *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem griechischen*, Göttingen 1968, and C. Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque*, Paris 1962 as well as some theologies of the Old Testament. Pasinya's study (pp. 25ff.) emphasises the defects of C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, as well as the faults of the entry νόμος in *TWNT* and J. M. Flashar, "Exegetische Studien zum Septuagintapsalter".

⁴⁷ See G. Dellling, "Die Begegnung zwischen Hellenismus und Judentum", 37–39.

As for the religion of the LXX, it must be stressed that as yet there is no theology of the Greek Bible that does justice to the great wealth of facts provided by that translation and the variety of opinions reflected by the various translators.

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