Dan Batovici – Kristin De Troyer (eds.), *Authoritative Texts and Reception History: Aspects and Approaches* (Biblical Interpretation Series 151; Leiden – Boston: Brill 2017). Pp. 346. €138.00 / $151.00. ISBN 978-90-04-33496-0

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The above-mentioned book consists of a variety of contributions related to reception history and is a result of a Conference in the Biblical and Early Christian Studies organized at St. Andrews University in 2011 under the same title. The book is divided into four basic sections, namely: 1) Old Testament / Hebrew Bible; 2) Pseudepigrapha and Dead Sea Scrolls; 3) New Testament and 4) Early Christianity. It also contains an index of sources.

Since this book is a collection of very different essays, I would like to focus on three articles, each from different part of the book, which show what could be hidden behind the term "reception history". The first one is entitled: "Reading the Septuagint: Hermeneutical Problem of a Translated Text" by Benjamin J. M. Johnson (p. 20-40), the second one: "Scripture and God's Authority: Case Studies and Further Questions" by Nicholas T. Wright (p. 157-166), and the third one: "The Early Christian Martyrdom Narratives: Narrative Features, Intertextuality and the Authoritative Texts Behind" by Marijana Vuković (p. 278-295).

Benjamin J. M. Johnson focuses on the hermeneutical problems associated with the Septuagint (LXX). Johnson presents his complementary, hermeneutical proposal on the background of three modern translation projects of the LXX, namely: 1) The New English Translation of Septuagint (NETS), 2) Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), and 3) La Bible d'Alexandrie. He characterises each of these projects, by using Paul Ricoeur's metaphor: 1) NETS as focused on "the world of the text" and "the word behind the text"; 2) BA as focused on "the world of the text" and "the world in front of the text"; and 3) LXX.D as standing in the middle, id est as focused on the "world of the text" while simultaneously looking both at "the world behind the text" and "the world in front of the text". Johnson's own approach is closest to the last project, which he just wants to supplement by the theory of "Speech and Act". Johnson's proposal to see LXX as a "communicative act" will help to see the dialectical connection between this text as transla-

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tion and as a literary product "on its own right". This is exemplified by exegesis of 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Quoting just one example from 1 Samuel 16:1-13, this approach helps to understand the peculiar translation of a Hebrew word מאס by ἐξουδενόω. Therefore, not simply as "reject" (as it is translated in LXX Pentateuch), but rather as "despise". This approach enables to see the author of the LXX 1 Sm not merely as a translator, but also as a composer of the text. As it is explained by further examples, it does not matter so much what was the original text standing behind LXX's variants. Although the fact that the Septuagint is a translated text needs to be always acknowledged, the priority is given to what author(s) wanted to communicate by the text in its final version.

Nicholas T. Wright's contribution entitled "Scriptures and God's Authority: Case Studies and Further Questions, contains the summary of the argument presented earlier in the book under the same title (2005, expanded reprint 2010). Wright draws attention to the fact that the term "authority" has been interpreted differently by different groups for whom Scripture plays a central role (Roman-catholic Christians, reformers, Jews). He emphasises that it is God, and not the Scripture itself, to whom the authority is granted and, therefore, it is impossible to speak about the same level of authority in all the layers of Scripture. As Write puts it: "For a Christian to understand the whole Bible as in some way authoritative commits one not only to a narrative reading of the whole but to a layering within the narrative, so that the different layers contribute differently to the reading" (p. 160). In place of "fundamentalist way" of reading the Bible, he proposes a model summarized in the 5 points/acts, which are: 1) creation, 2) fall, 3) covenant with Israel, 4) Jesus as Israel's Messiah, 5) the Spirit-driven church. Wright finds Biblical grounding for his model in Acts 5, and states that chapter 3 of Acts was only authoritative for chapter 5, but no further. Applying this model and seeing Jesus as a climax of Scripture, it is possible to overcome dichotomy between the Old and the New Testament. How it works in practice is illustrated further in two test cases, which are Sabbath and Monogamy.

Write argues that through this model it is possible to see the Old Testament's sabbath not as a part of no longer relevant Jewish law, but as a preparation for fulfilment which takes place in Jesus. With Jesus the Jubilee, the "great sabbath" or "ultimate sabbath" is already present. This, as Wright states, was realized among early Christian communities by sharing goods, and by Pauline concept of "justification by faith". The understanding of marriage goes in somewhat different direction. At that point New Testament definitely does not defuse the law (and therefore does not make life easier as in case of sabbath). As oppose to the Hebrew Bible, view on the monogamy is rather strict. It is so, because in the new creation marriage is seen as unbreakable unity between woman and man. There-

fore, it is impossible to hold an opinion about the "Jewish legalism" from which one is saved by New Testament's message.

Marijana Vuković investigates the texts called "martyrdom narratives" (passion and acts) up to the mid-4th century and compares them with the later narrations. After presenting some problems concerning genre, authorship, and dating, she tries to delineate narrative development within these texts based on dating adopted by Guy Philippart (and limiting herself only to some securely dated texts). Then, she aimes to present interdependence and the different authoritative texts behind these narratives.

Vuković notices considerable shifts between the earliest and the later martyrdom narratives that refer to both the form of speech and the tone of the text. The shift is also visible when intertextuality is considered. As to the narrative development Vuković observes, for instance, that the same basic sequence is present in virtually all early texts and looks as follows: martyr is sought → caught → imprisoned → put on trial → convicted → persecuted. In this sequence the trial is the core event. Therefore, the early martyrdom narratives consist mostly from dialogues between a martyr and the authority (e.g. *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*).

To the contrary, in the latter texts indirect speech prevails. The narration considerably lengthens. Information about martyr's origin became important and legendary elements are introduced. In case of *The Passion of Saint Eugenia* element of disguise and intrigue appears as well. Other discussed features are opening formulas, which locate the early narratives in time and space. They are present in the early period but later vanish. The tone of the discussion changes as well from more neutral to emotional or even hostile.

Looking at these texts from the perspective of intertextuality, Vuković underlines that whereas generally earlier texts are exclusive when it comes to other genres, meaning they draw mostly from earlier martyrdoms or renowned Christian authors (with the exception of well-known *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicita* which is a bit more open), the latter ones explore variety of different sources. For instance, the *Passion of Saint Eugenia* draws from monastic literature, apocryphal literature, Christian poetry, Greek novels while still maintaining some features from early martyrdoms.

As it can be seen from the above description, "reception history" is a rather broad and complex matter. I want to invoke here what Benjamin J. M. Johnson has said about the LXX that it is a "translation and communicative act". In a broader sense this statement is true about every text. By using familiar categories (tradition) the texts want to communicate something which is relevant in their times. This description holds true also in the different sense for all the New Testament writings, of which the original versions are lost. This means that all the books are translations (literally). In studying reception history, the most difficult

part, is to establish the proper "intertexture" for the texts (Q, Vorlage, Authoritative Texts Behind). For instance, the interferences of Vuković article might have been slightly different if she would adopt different dating of the texts (as this author is fully aware of). By giving priority to final version of the text one keeps his feet on the solid grounds.

An interesting observation was noted in Nicholas T. Wright's article, regarding the consequences of the "self-actualization" of the Bible. Although this idea partially echoes the concept of "God's pedagogy" according to which God revealed himself to people gradually in the Scripture, it is interesting to apply it to the "authority of God" itself. According to Wright, it means that at least from the Christian perspective, it is impossible to hold the same level of the authority for each writing in the Bible. This model, with its biblical and patristic grounding, can elucidate the deeper meaning of the Bible. It also shows that the word of the Scripture was always (to some degree), open to new interpretations and amendments on conceptual level, being a living word.

In sum, this volume is a very useful contribution for anyone interested in the rich terrain of reception history.