

Mario Cimosà, *Guida allo Studio della Bibbia Greca (LXX)*, (Società Biblica Britannica & Forestiera; Roma 1995), 272pp. ISBN 88-237-8007-1

This elegantly printed guide to the study of the Greek translation of what Christians of various denominations term "Old Testament" is timely indeed, and not only for speakers of Italian. Interest in this 'version' of such a collection of 'writings' is increasing (Cimosà's phrase on p.24 that "LXX vanno considerati come una letteratura originale che deve essere studiata in se stessa" even suggests perhaps that Septuagint studies should be considered already as an autonomous discipline. A position which may need to be nuanced). This can be seen from the contemporary publication of Cécile Dogniez, *Bibliography of the Septuagint. Bibliographie de la Septuagint. 1970-1993* published by E.J. Brill in 1995 (Understandably, there is no mention of this important instrument in Cimosà's monograph). Cimosà himself contributed a number of studies into the Septuagint, the more widely known being that on its prayer language, *La preghiera nella Bibbia Greca* (EDB; Rome 1992). In the present volume the Author offers some twenty pp. of essential bibliography covering general issues (pp.215-218), the specific writings (pp.218-231), grammar, syntax and lexicon (pp. 231-235). This students' guide (as Cimosà conceived of this work, p. 10) tends to focus on

issues of grammar, syntax and lexicon, though history and textual problems are not neglected.

There is another reason why interest in the Septuagint has seen new heights, and why publications of this kind are finding justification with publishers. There appeared in the world of Bible translation, ecclesial communities from Orthodoxy; these hold the Septuagint as the canonical version of the Old Testament. The present reviewer is aware of current debates about the 'Base Text' for translation purposes, debates which will one day come across solutions of compromise, but which still need efforts like Cimosà's to make the 'Greek Bible' better known among readers who are used to read the Old Testament mostly through translations of the Hebrew text. For the operators in the translation as well as in the exegetical fields, the study of the LXX has become, therefore, a must rather than a luxury which can be easily disposed of. In the rest of the following book review the reader will find a description, a commentary and a number of suggestions made in view of upgrading the quality of the services offered by this volume.

The title that the author has chosen for his publication defines its literary genre. This is meant to be a 'guide for the study' of the LXX corpus rather than an introduction offering general information. This guide is made up of three unequal parts. In the first part

Cimosa offers an introduction both to the corpus as a whole as well as to each 'writing' (pp. 13-65); then comes a first approach to its grammar, syntax and lexicon (pp. 67-136), and finally an anthology of textual and exegetical readings of chosen abstracts taken from most of the writings (pp. 139-204). In two of the three sections Cimosa offers a specialised and essential bibliography (pp. 13. 69-71) and footnotes where some of the more academic issues are discussed in more details. The third section constitutes Cimosa's personal contribution to guiding the reader into the intricate world of the version or rather of the individual writing under study. Here no bibliography is offered and the reader is referred to the works mentioned in the first part (cfr p. 139).

Issues of general nature that are treated in the first part include: the formation history of the corpus (pp. 13-16), the history of its use [The question of whether the LXX is inspired features high in this subsection. Cimosa avoids answering explicitly the question, but he leans towards giving a positive answer] (pp. 17-19), redaction history [What he terms "revisioni giudaiche delle traduzioni greche"], Christian editions, with special focus on Origene's *Hexapla* (p. 20), and finally the theology of the cluster [Cimosa's statement concerning the reason why this group of Scriptures should be considered as having a theology ("Se la traduzione greca dei Settanta è la più citata nel NT vuol dire

che quindi ha una sua teologia," p.20) may need some rethinking in view of the non-monolithic nature of the corpus, cfr note 55 for Kraft's objections to such umbrella expressions being used as 'Biblical translations' 'Biblical language', 'a peculiar Greek'. Cimosa himself writes of "traduzioni piuttosto che una traduzione" (p. 26). One may perhaps speak about a theology constructed *a posteriori* on the text of the various writing, although one may admit to the existence of translation strategies in the choice of vocabulary and syntax of the various translators; but do such strategies reflect a well defined theology constructed by the translators themselves? Can't we say that this theology existed already in the *Vorlagen*? The present reviewer considers such issues as needful of a deeper treatment in a Guide to LXX studies like this], and the relevance of LXX studies (pp. 21-25)].

The greater part of the General Introduction is taken by the introductions to the individual books (pp. 26-51). This presentation of, or guide into each writing is sometimes too sketchy to be really useful even though to each presentation the author adds an essential bibliography. The writer sometimes underlines the literary unity of the writing (so with Genesis), or the relation of the LXX recension to the Masoretic Text (cfr the Exodus introduction); or he surveys its textual criticism (so with Leviticus), or considers the level of

translation (Deuteronomy). One should note that Cimosà does not furnish a particular introduction to one and all writings as found in A. Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, (Stuttgart 1935) [This is to be remedied to when when a second edition is prepared). Cimosà writes an introduction only to texts which reputedly create special difficulties for reading; he groups these under two headings: "The Pentateuch and the Historical Books" which include entries for Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, 1-2Esdras, the Greek additions to the Book of Esther, Judith, Tobit, and the four books of Maccabees. The next cluster entitled "Poetic and Didactic Books" is made up of introductions to the Psalms, the Odes (Only "The Prayer of Manasseh" is discussed), Song of Songs, Job, Wisdom of Solomon, Qohelet, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Zechariah [No explanation is given for focusing only on problems in Zech 9-14], and Daniel or rather the Greek additions to the Hebrew original. For a quick reference of which books of the LXX are discussed one should consult p.268. Unfortunately, Cimosà's option of introducing only a selection of writings, affected his General Bibliography, for he included entries only on writings he discusses, while in a Guide one would expect to find at least some bibliographical reference on such books as 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezechiel, etc, though all

would understand the constraints of having to publish a book of affordable size and price.

The second part of the volume is a useful survey of special and not special aspects of LXX grammar, syntax and lexicon. The bibliography with which this part opens is substantial, with entries on grammars, studies on particular grammatical issues, lexica, concordances, and research monographs on aspects of lexicon and style. We should not expect an exhaustive manual on these topics since Cimosà promises to offer only 'osservazioni' on grammar, syntax [In the introductory note on the relationship of LXX syntax to that of classical Greek on the one hand and to the underlying Hebrew substratum on the other, the reader is not prepared for the writer's focusing in the third paragraph (p.96) on the Book of Revelation. Please note that the concluding inverted commas before the note number 37 must have fallen out.] and lexicon [The remarks on method on p. 122 merit to be read diligently by anyone studying LXX].

Then Cimosà offers short discussions on a small number of important terms/concepts [The bibliography never pretends to be exhaustive; on the term *agape* in Italian there is, for instance, Piero Coda, *L'Agape come grazia e libertà. Alla Radice della teologia e prassi dei cristiani*, (Città Nuova; Roma 1994) which may be useful notwithstanding its

theological stance.] by way of exemplifying how lexical analyses should be conducted. A similar demonstrative intention seems to have the anthology of about thirty short studies of specific texts, at times just covering one verse, on other times a much wider textual extension, in the third section of the volume. Each study consists of the Masoretic Text in translation, the LXX text, a translation in Italian of the Greek version, and a commentary. Each study merits to be read for its own sake. Perhaps one

should spell out better the methodology adopted. One would hope that a major publication be conceived with studies of the kind; it will be useful for translators and exegetes alike.

The author and the publishing house are to be congratulated for this book and this service rendered to study.

Rev. Dr. Anthony Abela
Department of Holy Scripture
Faculty of Theology
University of Malta
Msida, Malta.