

BOOK REVIEWS

Carol L. MEYERS/Eric MEYERS, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* (Anchor Bible 25 B; Doubleday, Garden City, New York 1987) XCV, 478 pp.

The Anchor Bible standard for commentaries as explained by its general editors, namely, that "The AB is aimed at the general reader with no special formal training in biblical studies, yet, it is written with the most exacting standards of scholarship, reflecting the highest technical accomplishment" has well been reached by this volume, number 25 B of the series. Written in straightforward and uncomplicated English, and enriched with three maps, thirteen explanatory charts, seventeen photographs and a glossary of technical terms, this commentary remains within the reach of the non-professional.

The professional readers are offered by Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers (herefrom referred to as MM), the authors (who happen to be husband and wife), the basic AB characteristic services: a good introduction (pp. XXIX-LXXII) which is a must for the proper understanding of the commentary since it contains the theoretical apparatus employed by the authors; twenty-two pages of bibliography, alphabetically and chronologically arranged (pp. LXIII-XCV) [from which is missing

the two volumes work in Spanish] by Luis Alonso Schökel and J.L. Sicre Diaz, *Profetas. Commentario*, I and II (Ediciones Cristianidad; Madrid 1980) which is unfortunate as in both works a literary approach has been adopted; also missing from the bibliography are some interesting general introductions to the prophetic phenomenon like Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (Harper & Row; New York 1962); Gerhard von Rod, *Theologie des Alten Testaments, II, Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels* (Chr. Kaiser Verlag; Munich 1965); André Neher, *L'essence du prophetisme* (Calman-Lévy; Paris 1972, 1983) and, to complete the list of remarkable omissions, Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (SCM Press; London 1979). One should note, however, that MM find no place in their introduction for a brief discussion on prophetism in general, something which might have been useful for readers who happen to know little of the biblical prophets, [all the more so as Haggai and Zechariah are said in the introduction itself (p. XL) to join the ranks of Israel's prophets]; an original translation of the texts involved chapter by chapter [one should not neglect the authors' 'note on the translation' (pp. XXV-XXVI) before endeavouring an evaluation of their contribution]; a huge mass of notes on the text verse by verse [these may run into several pages as

is the case of Hag 1,1 which gathered no less than thirteen pages of notes (pp. 4-17)]; and a commentary on the text subunit by subunit.

Within MM's introductory discussion of Haggai and First Zechariah relatively small is the space dedicated to the reconstruction of the books' historical context (pp. XXIX-XL, of which three pages are taken for maps); even fewer are the pages left for the discussion of the two prophets' ministry (pp. XL-XLIV), textual criticism (pp. LXVIII-LXXII) (MM limit their research to only 'recent study'). By far the larger slice of the introduction falls under the rubric "Literary Considerations" (pp. XLIV-LXVII); it is in this section that MM spell out the literary principles which guided their reading and interpretation of the two prophetic writings; here we find most of the explanatory charts which deal with linguistic and literary phenomena.

It is this section which contains the key to MM's understanding of Haggai and First Zechariah. The authors make here a number of considerations concerning the book's redaction history and literary peculiarities which merit to be briefly reproduced:

(a) "Haggai and the first eight chapters of the canonical book of Zechariah belong together as a composite work". "While they diverge to a certain extent in the specifics of their works, the two prophets complement each other, as one might indeed expect of two men of God

who are responding to virtually the same questions and the same quandaries" (p. XLIV). Justification for this statement is offered in what the authors call thematic, contextual and literary congruences (pp. XLIV-XLVIII).

(b) "The anticipation of the rededication of the (second) temple would have provided the motivation for the organization and promulgation of these two prophetic works. We might even posit a functional relationship between publication of Haggai-Zechariah 1-8 and the rededication ceremony. The former may have helped to ensure that the latter took place" (p. XLV).

(c) "The many chronological markers found within the text of Haggai and First Zechariah provide the overall structure for the combined work. They are also important for dating the materials to which they are attached, for presumably the prophet or editor would not otherwise have bothered with them. The arrangement of the dates in or of itself is of interest... This arrangement creates a focus on the central date. The chronological climax of Haggai-Zechariah 1-8 is clearly the event of December 18, 520, the refoundation ceremony. All the chronological markers thus have been carefully set into place in Haggai-Zechariah 1-8 to draw attention to a momentous event and also to provide a structure for the work as a whole" (p. XLVII, consult Chart 2 on p. XLVI).

(d) On the basis of the five chro-

nological headings in Haggai (1,1; 1,15; 2,1; 2,10; 2,20) MM divide this small book first in two sections and then into five subunits:

A. Restoration of the Temple (1,1-15):

- (a) Prophetic call to work on the Temple (1,1-11).
- (b) Response of leaders and people (1,12-15).

B. Oracles of Encouragement (2,1-23):

- (a) Assurance of God's presence (2,1-9).
- (b) Priestly ruling with prophetic interpretation (2,10-19).
- (c) Future hope (2,20-23).

"Each subunit has its own integrity with respect to content, although there is a development from first to last and a building upon themes which give an overall unity to this book (p. XLVIII).

(e) First Zechariah is divided by MM into three unequal subunits: 1,1-6; 1,7-6,15; 7,1-8,23. This division is founded both on the three-fold appearance of the date formula at the beginning of each subdivision, and on the nature of the material in each unit. The predominance in each subsection of one of the literary genres employed by the author of First Zechariah, namely, narration, vision and oracle – consult Chart 4 on p. LI – has been decisive for the three-fold division seen by MM. "In addition to these differences in the genre and style of prophetic utterances, the internal content of each section fits the chronological information pro-

vided at the outset of each. Although the total time frame is not great, there are evidently important developments in what is happening within the prophet's community which evoke his response at intervals" (p. L). "Although the organization of the material into three sections is quite clear, the overall unity of the whole is equally compelling" (p. LI). This statement is grounded on literary phenomena: the presence in each subunit of genres that are predominant in other subunits – consult Chart 4 on p. LI – and correspondences in phraseology and vocabulary between the three subsections of First Zechariah – see Charts 5 and 6 on pp. LII-LIII; one should also consult Chart 3 on p. XLIX for correspondences between Haggai and Zech 7-8 as well as Chart 7 on p. LIV for parallels between Haggai and Zech 1,1-6.

(f) "First Zechariah offers his audience a carefully arranged sequence of eight visions" (p. LIV). These visions are:

(i) Organized into three subunits: a first group of three visions is followed by a pair of visions, while another set of three visions closes the rear; each vision is numbered, with the exception of one (p. LVI);

(ii) built in such a way that the first group of visions parallels the last group: the parallels touch upon internal structure of each vision, subject-matter and language – see p. LV but also the commentary for detailed treatment;

(iii) arranged chiastically: "...the

correspondences between the individual units of the first and third subsets are organized in inverse order, with the first and last vision complementing each other, the same for the second and sixth, and also for the third and fifth” (p. LV); such arrangement rests on stylistic grounds; this “has the effect of establishing the central pair as a complementary set, although the stylistic correspondences between those two are absent; stylistic contrast... in fact characterizes the relationship of the central two visions to each other” (ibid.);

(iv) thematically related within the concentric structure: “...the stylistic correlations between the first and third subsets are accompanied by thematic relationships”; this thematic correspondence involves especially the scope of the visions — consult Chart 8 where these thematic relationships are graphically described: visions one and seven carry a universal dimension, visions two and six an international scope, while this scope narrows down to the national field in visions three and five; for MM the result of this progressively smaller field of interest is that “the central subset emerges with the temple in Jerusalem as the centre of the prophet’s universe; the overall structure “can be conceived of as a series of superimposed circles as shown in Chart 8, with Yahweh and the whole world as the largest circle and the temple and the leadership of Yehud at the centre. Such an arrangement is meant to show that the

smaller circles are inseparable from the larger ones, which contain them. Jerusalem at the centre is part of Yehud, of the international community of nations, and of the cosmos as ordered by Yahweh” (p. LV);

(v) indicative of the prophet’s main concern: “The intricate structure of the sequence of eight visions has the effect of drawing the attention of the audience to the central subset... The prophet’s ultimate concern, we learn from this arrangement, lies with the temple and the leadership in Jerusalem. In this sense, the full visionary set can properly be called Zechariah’s Temple Visions. Although only the central two visions deal explicitly with the temple, the fact that the centre is an integral part of a carefully constructed whole indicates that the entire sequence emerges from the prophet’s acute awareness of the conceptual and political problems surrounding the reorganization of the postexilic community and the reconstruction of that community’s institutional core” (pp. LV-LVI).

(g) “Chapters 7 and 8 of the Book of Zechariah play a special role in the organization of Zechariah and also in the relationship between the Books of Haggai and Zechariah. The two chapters constitute a distinct literary unit. Although itself composed of four sub-units, it has an overall integrity as one of the major sections of First Zechariah. Furthermore its clear

relationship to the material in Haggai... creates a framework for Haggai-Zechariah 1-8 and indicates that Zechariah 1-8 forms a composite work with the two chapters of Haggai" (p. LX). For a detailed corroboration of these two statements the reader is invited to go through the notes and comments in the commentary (pp. 379-428). As with the other major divisions of Hag-Zech 1-8 this last unit is made up of a number of subunits – refer to p. LXIII.

Remarks

MM's reconstruction of the redaction history and the literary dynamics of Haggai-First Zechariah, however insightful, cannot but raise a number of questions. While the thesis that these biblical tests actually form part of a composite work seems to find solid corroboration in the relatively elevated number of correspondences between Haggai and Zechariah, 7-8 – consult Chart 3 on p. XLIX – we have still to explain how Zech 7-8 shares none with the other two parts of First Zechariah of the more important terms/concepts like 'House of Yahweh of Hosts', 'people of the land', 'Elohim', also found in Haggai – see Charts 5 and 6 on pp. LII-LIII. Besides, this thesis must account for the fact that Haggai enjoyed independent existence throughout tradition, even notwithstanding the possibility that the name *Haggai* is a symbol rather than a proper name – refer to p. 8.

There is then MM's thesis that Zechariah's eight visions are set within a concentric structure which points to the prophet's ultimate concern with the post-exilic temple and leadership in Jerusalem. Their description of the overall structure of the central section in First Zechariah does not seem to take into account the relationship between the structure's nucleus and the out-flanking elements of the Hag-Zech composite entity.

Some minor points:

(i) The present reviewer finds MM's emphasis on the possible semantic relevance of the traditional 7+1 pattern, detected within the chronology formulae (p. XLVII) of the Hag-Zech unity, and the 'conscious' arrangement of the visionary units in Zech (p. LVII) rather laboured.

(ii) Emphasis through repetition on salient points within a thesis is understandable and acceptable. Yet unnecessary repetition may prove harmful for the volume – for instance, the question of who could have been responsible for the redactional unity Hag-Zech 1-8 is discussed at least twice (pp. XLIV, LXII).

(iii) The reference system adopted in this volume, which refers to sources by the authors' surname, the books' date of publication, and the page number, all set within the text, facilitates matters for setting and printing; yet it makes the task for the reader rather more laborious as he has to go back to the bibliography in order to learn what

the authors referred to write in the years indicated, or else he has to memorize the entire bibliography!

(iv) MM endorsed R.E. Friedman's thesis developed in his 1983 paper 'The Prophet and the Historian. The Acquisition of historical Information from Literary Sources' (see bibliography on p. LXXXI for details), that the father of Haggai's high priest Joshua, Jehozadak (see Hag 1,1) was responsible for overseeing the editing and preparation of the Pentateuch (Torah) and the Former Prophets (Joshua through 2 Kings), a composite opus Friedman called 'Primary History'. Apart from some confusion in MM's volume on what actually constituted the 'Primary History' (compare p. 16 with p. 18), it would be better perhaps to identify what is "primary" in Israelite history with what happened during the 'foundation period' as narrated in the Pentateuch.

These minor points notwithstanding, the present reviewer found this book fascinating, and would recommend it to whomsoever wishes to know better not only the two prophetic scripts under study but the Old Testament world as a whole.

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Maurice EMINJAN S.J., *Signs of the Times* (Jesuit Publications: Malta 1987) V + 106 pp.

The author of this stimulating selection of papers has been Professor of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology at the University of Malta (1965-1978) and at the Faculty of Theology and is well-known both for his several publications based on theological research and as an effective broadcaster in Maltese-language TV religious programmes.

The present volume contains a wide-ranging set of articles all of them reflecting Vatican II teaching and the Church's Magisterium under the following headings: 1. Green Light to Renewal; 2. Christian Secularity; 3. Sacrament of Salvation; 4. Good News for the Man of Today; 5. Reunited in Christ; 6. Urge of the Spirit: the New Cults; 7. The Phenomenon of Modern Atheism; 8. The Unity of Mankind; 9. Community through Free Communications; 10. Moral Values in a Technical Age; 11. Prophetic Witness. Some of the chapters, Eminyan informs us in his Preface, were basically papers read on different occasions, while other are adaptations of articles which appeared in various periodicals.

The author writes easily and informatively in a style at one clear and intelligible to both the specialized and the general reader. The book is well-structured in its arguments, deriving its strength, apart

from Papal pronouncements and the Church documents, from the balance shown in drawing on historical evidence and recent scholarship to deal with the various questions and problems facing man in our technical age.

As an antidote to the despair and materialism of the 20th century we are offered the spiritual motivation of a life of faith, hope and charity in the context of and according to the demands of today's world.

Each article in this collection deserves to be read slowly. Here we can only mention a few aspects of Eminyan's book. Without minimising the importance of Vatican II as a landmark in the history of the Church he stresses that it was Pius XII's encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) which gave the green light for new methods and principles of interpreting the Holy Scripture, opening new horizons for theologians and biblical scholars. Indeed he states that "without *Divino Afflante* there would have been no *Dei Verbum* (1965) and in fact there would have been no Vatican II with all the sixteen documents such as we know them today" (p. 4).

Well known as the author of *The Theology of Salvation* (1960) and *The Mystery of Salvation* (1973), Fr. Eminyan contributes three chapters to this important theme, dealing respectively with 'The Sacrament of Salvation', with the doctrine of salvation (the Good News) as envisaged by modern theology in 'Good News for the Man of Today'

and with the problem of Ecumenism in 'Reunited in Christ'.

In Chapter 6 he studies the problem posed by the rise and proliferation of new cults such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Bahai's and the Moonies. He examines their main characteristics in the light of recent studies by scholars and theologians and adduces various reasons why the Church should be concerned with the rise and influence of the new cults. The conclusion reached is that the only possible answer to such an aggression can be a pastoral one (p. 56), whilst the possibility of entering into dialogue with other faiths is not excluded (p. 58).

Similarly in Chapter 7 the author analyses the causes of contemporary atheism, and anti-theism, with the aim of understanding this phenomenon, not to disprove it. He stresses that the Church, in the words of Vatican II and of Pope Paul's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, "must react not with censure, but with understanding; not condemn those who are away from her, but establish a dialogue with them" (p. 70).

The frequent exchange of ideas between the scientist and the theologian on the subject of polygenesis and original sin forms the subject of Chapter 8. The scientific question regarding the origin of man from one pair (monogenesis) or from many couples (polygenesis) has theological implications. Eminyan refers to recent attempts made to harmonize the Church's teachings on original sin with the theory

of polygenesis and shows that theological opinion is veering more and more away from monogenesis, concluding that "it is not too optimistic to say that a breakthrough on the problem is in sight" (p. 73).

Another topical subject treated in Chapter 9 'Community through Free Communications' considers the need of placing the mass media at the service of man rather than subjecting man to the media through manipulation of social communication media by Governments or powerful private commercial bodies.

Jesuit Publications are to be congratulated for issuing such an important book for our time which should be popular among students and interested lay readers.

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Umberto NERI (ed.), *Genesi* (Biblia AT/1; Gribaudi, Turin 1986) XXIX, 660 pp.

Elegant but expensive, encyclopedic but profound. These two pairs of adjectives suit this first volume of an ambitious project called "Biblia" which is promoted by the "Comunità di Monteveglio" in Italy. Several volumes of this series have their preparation already begun. The series sub-title "Biblia: I

Libri della Bibbia interpretati dalla grande Tradizione" already hints to the contents of the individual volumes; the promoters intend to make available to a wide readership the interpretation given to the text of the Bible throughout the centuries. The title page of the present volume mentions the commentaries of no less than sixteen authors, besides versions and targums.

This volume consists essentially of three unequal parts. We have first a preface by Giuseppe Dossetti, which offers an apologia for the Biblia project as a whole. GD draws heavily upon the 1956 Lent pastoral letter of Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the then patriarch of Venice, *La Scrittura e San Lorenzo Giustiniani* in order to justify the project's general orientation of reading Scripture within Tradition. This had been the practice of the community to which he belongs and which is responsible for the Biblia series: "legge, prega, commenta in comune la Scrittura in *lectio continua*... e tutto questo nella chiesa, cioè mantenedosi sempre a contatto con la sua grande Tradizione e il suo Magistero, dalle origini sino ad oggi, non ignorando i commenti più recenti, ma non trascurando, anzi utilizzando ampiamente anche gli antichi (e perciò, senza il pregiudizio contrario che essi siano del tutto irrilevanti ai fini di una vera e propria esegesi)" (vii). Among the several points of reflection gleaned from Roncalli's document three are especially relevant to the under-

standing of the hermeneutical principles being followed in this project: “Tutta la Bibbia è un unico libro” notwithstanding the multiplicity of the ‘scriptores’ (viii); “Tutta la Bibbia ha un senso spirituale, e questo senso, di tutte le scritture e di tutti i libri è il Cristo” (viii): here Roncalli distinguishes between the “veil” (i.e. the ‘words’) and the “verità tutta santa che soggiace alle parole e contiene il messaggio di Dio per l’umanità intera, cioè Cristo nei suoi misteri al di sopra di ogni realtà e conoscenza umana” (ix); “La Bibbia va letta nella Tradizione, e in continuità omogenea con essa va interpretata” (ix); the patriarch of Venice quotes the beautiful image of St. Augustine who figured the Christian as reading Scripture on the knees of Mother Church “che ne è l’interprete autentica e sicura” (ix).

GD then defines the aims of *Biblia* in clear and simple terms: “...lo scopo della collezione è di offrire... per i singoli libri della Bibbia un approccio patristico, o meglio più ampiamente ‘tradizionale’, che sia filologicamente esatto, concettualmente rispettoso delle fonti e insieme abbastanza agile ed armonico. Questo, e niente di più” (xiii). He integrates the project within the current debate about the relationship between modern exegesis and tradition, and about the apparent sterile development of the historical critical method (xiv). GD insists that the series does not intend to offer an alternative to the historical critical approach to the

Bible, nor should we read in it an invitation to return to the exegetical approaches of the patristic or medieval authors. *Biblia* simply means “di cominciare – sia pure per ora da un versante solo, cioè quello certo della fede – a mettere a disposizione un materiale di confronto vasto e ben selezionato” (xiv) which would put side by side contrasting interpretations without prejudice against any exegetical current, and which would stimulate both believer and researcher “offrendo non solo dei discorsi preliminari sull’ambiente biblico e sull’iter formattivo del testo, ma anche dei contenuti interpretativi ben precisi, sia pure opinabili quanto si vuole per uno studioso moderno, ma sempre non banali” (xiv). GD closes his preface with a longish quote from Emilio Betti’s 1955 manual, *Teoria general dell’interpretazione* to prove the wisdom of taking tradition into account during the hermeneutical process (xv-xvi).

Next comes Umberto Neri’s own introduction both to the entire series and also to this Genesis volume (xvii-xlvi). To open this introduction we find the list of siglas, which refer only to general reference works, and the bibliography (xix-xxvii). Thereupon follows a chapter on *Biblia* (XXXI-LVII). UN here appears as the originator of the series (XXXI) and hence assumes the task of describing the project’s *Gattung*: we encounter here another “catena”. This definition is preceded by an excursus on

“rabbinic bibles, catenae and glossae” (XXXI-XXXV); UN then explains the reasons for his choice of this genre. Catenae and glossae “rappresentano un fatto teologico di immensa importanza” (XXXVI) since they assume (i) that the Bible should be received within tradition, (ii) that the Fathers of the Church together with the “probatu auctores”, in spite of their differences in theological sensibility and approach, “finiscono abitualmente per comporsi in una mirabile ‘concordia discors’ ” and can be put side by side without harm to any of them. UN considers these assumptions as substantially valid and makes them to constitute the foundations of the Biblia project itself (ibid). This series is planned to fill an important gap: “Sia il rinnovamento biblico che la rinascita patristica in atto, hanno in fatti evidente bisogno di essere efficacemente sostenuti e potenziati. Ma a questo scopo occorre farli convergere tra loro. Rivalorizzare cioè nel modo giusto la Tradizione mostrando il vigore e la bellezza dei maestri del passato, e leggere la Bibbia in modo più sapido e profondo collocandosi nel fascio di luce della Tradizione” (XXXVI) UN laments the lack of interest among modern exegetes in patristic and medieval exegesis (XXXVII): “...siamo convinti che l’esegesi antica può ancora insegnare moltissimo sul modo di accostare e di intendere la Scrittura: sulla fede con cui va creduta, sullo spirito con cui va accolta, sulla sua interpreta-

zione globale, sulle prospettive nelle quali si struttura il discorso biblico, sulle fasi del suo sviluppo e sui suoi contenuti più profondi e vitali” (ibid).

Biblia is a catena with a difference though. In selecting its sources the project lays no a priori conditions against any period, school or tradition en bloc. Besides, in quoting its commentaries Biblia editions do not search “la risposta a problemi costituiti da versetti difficili o la soluzione di dibattute ‘questiones’ esegetiche, quanto principalmente l’apertura di orizzonte spirituali e teologici, e la percezione dell’impatto che la Parola biblica ha avuto nell’esperienza dei maestri del passato, e che può ancora avere nella nostra vita di credenti” (XXXIX). One important departure from former catenae concerns the typographical disposition of the quotes: they are not ‘chained’ as to form a unitarian reading: instead they are reproduced in distinct clusters so as to avoid “che si confondano in modo acritico apporti di epoche e autori diversi,” and to follow for the “lettura isolata e continua di ogni singolo commento” (ibid). Biblia differs from its predecessors in another area: it offers textual criticism by comparing the basic Italian version, that adopted by the Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI) to the Masoretic Text (M), and the main versions of the Septuagint (S), the Syriac Peshitta (P) and the Vulgate (V). References are also made to

targumic literature (*ibid.*).

In a second chapter of the introduction UN deals with the various elements that compose *Biblia* (XLI-LVII). He discusses at some length the good points and short-comings of the masoretic text, the versions mentioned above, and the several commentaries included within the series (*cfr.* XL). The final chapter (LXI-CXXXVIII) specifically considers Genesis: the text of MSPV is discussed first while an evaluation of the CEI Genesis is also given (LXI-LXXVII); then the various scriptores from tradition whose works are included in this volume are passed under review; these authors are Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Procopus, St. Ephrem, Narsai, Ishodad of Merv, Ambrose, Augustine, the Venerable Bede, Rupert of Deuts, Hugo of St. Chaire, the reformers Luther and Calvin, and the modern scholars Albert-Eugene Clamer, Gerhard von Rad and Walther Zimmerli. In his discussion on the individual commentators UN brings to the fore the hermeneutical principles followed. Realistically enough the editor of the present volume ends this list of authors with an overview of the absentees among whom he singles out the commentary of Claus Westermann (CXXXVIIf).

The bulk of the volume is understandably taken by the text of Genesis in its Italian translation, together with the various commentaries of the authors mentioned in the introduction. The procedure em-

ployed here is simple: (i) first comes the reproduction of an abstract of the text (which may run in several verses, but it may also be limited to one verse, *cfr.* Gen 1, 1 for instance); (ii) there follows textual criticism: the editor compares the CEI translation to MSPV and reproduces the variant readings; (iii) the comments of the various authors on that abstract are next given in chronological order. Before embarking on a detailed study of the single texts one should make sure to command the symbols of the textual apparatus (to the List of errata – *corrigere* I suggest we add “*distintue*” on p. CXLI line 5 which should read “*distingue*”) and the sigla of the several sources to be quoted (CXLI-CXLV) while he should read attentively the instructions given on p. CXLVI.

Two Questions

This book raises a number of questions to which an answer must be found. I shall mention only two. (a) UN seems to endorse the thesis of the inspiration of the Septuagint version – *cfr.* in particular pp. XLV-XLVI. One may ask whether in those cases where M and S offer substantially different versions we have two different, if not contrasting, inspired texts of God’s word. (b) This book opens in a concrete manner the debate about the relationship of the so called “*literal sense*” and the “*senso spirituale*”, that is, between the *sensus humanus*

and the presumed "sensus divinus" which includes and transcends the human sense. Whatever the beauty and theological depth of certain comments made by patristic, medieval or reform authors, one may still be faced with the methodological query whether these reflections belong to the literal sense of the text. Let us consider the comment of St. Ambrose on Gen 13,3 given on p. 193:

“È bene che il principio e la fine coincidano, come disse il buon Signore Gesù: lo sono l’alfa e l’omega, il principio e la fine (Ap 1,8). La nostra anima, dunque, sia sempre con lui e mai si allontani dal suo tempio e dalla sua parola: sia sempre occupata a leggere le Scritture, a meditare e a pregare, affinché la Parola — che veramente è ‘sua’ — sempre operi in noi (cfr. 1 Ts 2,13); e come ogni giorno, andando alla chiesa o pregando in casa, da lui cominciamo e in lui finiamo, così il giorno di tutta questa nostra vita e il corso di questo ‘giorno’ da lui abbia inizio e in lui abbia fine.”

The thought of making this profound paraenesis available to a wide readership is laudable indeed; but it is very difficult to read it as exegesis of this Abraham itinerary (C. Westermann). Non-specialists ought to know that not a few of the comments included in this volume have no foundation at all in the text. Pat-

ristic and medieval commentaries often offer splendid theologizing over the text, theologizing which is not exegesis.

With all that this volume will serve a useful purpose. The general reader will be made more aware that Scripture and Tradition go together as sources of revelation. Teachers who lecture into the history of the biblical text and into the history of exegesis and hermeneutics will find this volume a very useful tool. The professional exegete, especially those who propound holistic approaches, may delight in discovering that some of their intuitions are not that novel, after all, since others expressed them centuries before, albeit without their tools of literary criticism!

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