

REVIEW OF / RESEÑA DE: RODRIGUE, Paul. *Jerome's Sources in His Translation of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures 38. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2023.– ISBN: 978-1-80511-639-4.– xviii+350 pp.

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The present volume offers a thoughtful and methodical re-examination of one of Western Christianity's foundational translations: the Jerome's Latin version of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). Rather than treating Jerome's text as a straightforward translation of the Hebrew, the author demonstrates, through detailed case studies, that Jerome's approach was far more complex, combining the Hebrew (and Aramaic) original, the Greek tradition (notably the LXX), earlier Latin versions, and Jewish exegetical traditions. In this sense, the book substantially contributes to our understanding of translation strategy, multilingual textual transmission and late-antique Christian-Jewish scholarly interaction.

The main body of the book consists of four chapters and a conclusion. The volume opens with a Preface (pp. xi-xiv), followed by a list of abbreviations used (pp. xv-xviii) and the first chapter, the Introduction (pp. 1-106). The latter is divided into nine sections in which the author systematically addresses various linguistic, textual, and translation-related issues concerning the text of the Vulgate, ultimately leading to the aim of the present study. The second chapter is entitled "The Translation of the Joseph Story" (pp. 107-153); the third, "The Translation of the Book of Daniel" (pp. 155-240); and the fourth, "The Translation of the Book of Esther" (pp. 241-308), followed by the conclusions (pp. 309-313). The volume concludes with a bibliography (pp. 315-346) and an index of proper names (pp. 347-348), place names (pp. 348-349), and subjects (pp. 349-350).

The author has structured his argument in three principal case-studies: (1) the Joseph narrative in Genesis 37-50, (2) the Book of Daniel, and (3) the Book of Esther (with attention paid to the chronology of Jerome's work, spanning from his translations around years 392-393 (Daniel) to late-career efforts in 404-405 (Esther). The introduction situates Jerome's declared objective of *hebraica veritas* and shows how Jerome himself claimed adherence to the Hebrew origin. Yet the author contests the simplicity of this claim by showing how Jerome in practice drew on multiple traditions.

In the first chapter on Genesis, the author examines a range of selected verses from the Joseph story (Gn 37-50). He highlights examples in which Jerome either followed the Hebrew text against the Septuagint (e.g. Gn 37:28, where Jerome corrects "gold" to "silver" in his translation, invoking the New Testament's thirty pieces of silver) or instances where Jerome's rendering seems to reflect a conflation of Hebrew, Septuagint, Old Latin and rabbinic traditions. In doing so, the author demonstrates that Jerome's method cannot be characterised simply as a literal translation from

Hebrew; instead, he reveals a translation practice which is dynamic, selective and often mediated through Greek and Latin intermediaries.

The author's second major study addresses the Book of Daniel. He assesses how Jerome's Latin translation reflects his knowledge of the Hebrew-Aramaic *Vorlage*, but also how he consults Greek versions (notably of Theodotion) and earlier Latin witnesses. He argues convincingly that Jerome's version of Daniel is more conservative and closer to his declared objective of bringing Latin Christians into contact with the Hebrew text, but even here he shows that he occasionally departs from the Hebrew when he deems the Greek tradition more intelligible or preferable.

In the third focus area, the Book of Esther, the author shows how Jerome's translation method matured (or shifted) in his later career. Here, the translation displays a more literary and less strictly Hebraic plan. Jerome's renderings become freer, more paraphrastic, and more heavily influenced by Greek and Latin traditions, suggesting that by this stage, his adherence to *hebraica veritas* gave way to a pragmatic Latin-Christian editorial aim, seeking readability and theological coherence for the Latin audience.

Across these case studies, the author identifies several recurring translation techniques: (1) Jerome's explicit appeal to Hebrew when he contrasts it with the Septuagint (*iuxta Hebraicam veritatem*); (2) situations in which Jerome defers to or combines Greek traditions (especially where the Hebrew text is obscure); (3) instances of paraphrase or omission in the Latin text (particularly in Esther) where Jerome gives priority to sense-rather than literal adherence (*sensus de sensu*); and (4) his occasional use of variant Old Latin and Greek traditions to shape his translation choices.

The author's commentary also pays strong attention to the multilingual context of late-antique biblical scholarship: Hebrew-Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and the Jewish tradition of targumîm and midrashîm are all in play. He underscores the intellectual complexity of Jerome's project. It was not a simple translation of the Hebrew into Latin, but it was rather a work of textual criticism, comparative version-analysis and theological editing. From a methodological standpoint, author's strengths are many. Firstly, his careful selection of case-studies allows him to demonstrate concrete evidence rather than making broad unsupported generalisations. The sharp focus on particular verses (e.g., Gn 37:3; 37:28; 49:21) enables detailed discussion of Jerome's sources, his translation decisions, and his underlying editorial rationale. For example, in analysing Gn 49:21, the author shows how Jerome's Latin *cervus emissus* reflects the Hebrew אֵילָה שְׁלֹחָה ("hind set free"), but with the influence of Greek translator renderings and Old Latin tradition. Secondly, the use of a multilingual comparative apparatus (Hebrew/Aramaic MT, Septuagint, Aquila/Symmachus/Theodotion, Old Latin, Vulgate) brings to light Jerome's didactic and editorial ambitions and moves the scholarship forward by situating Jerome not as hermetically latinate but as deeply engaged with Jewish and Greek sources. Thirdly, the author's chronological framing of Jerome's work (early, middle, later) brings out the dynamic evolution of Jerome's translation method and his shifting priorities across his career.

Nevertheless, the work does provoke some critical reflections. One might question the selection of texts: while Genesis, Daniel and Esther are well-chosen for their temporal spread and textual complexity, the exclusion of other books (such as the Pentateuch more broadly, or Prophets) means that the conclusions about Jerome's method rest on a somewhat limited sample. While the author acknowledges this limitation, it means that generalisations about Jerome's translation habits must be treated with caution. And while his argumentation is precise, a more systematic quantitative survey of Jerome's whole corpus would strengthen the findings.

Another issue is the depth of engagement with Jerome's Jewish informant-networks and the practicalities of his Hebrew/Aramaic competence. While the author addresses the role of Jewish traditions and targumic sources, the book might have benefitted from more archival or papyrolo-

gical evidence about Jerome's actual access to Hebrew manuscripts, his collaboration with Jewish scholars in Bethlehem and Rome, and the sociological dimensions of Latin-Hebrew translation in Late Antiquity. Some readers might desire more discussion of the institutional and cultural context of Jerome's work: monastic *scriptoria*, the circulation of Latin translations, and the interplay of power, language and theology in the Latin West. Moreover, while the author emphasises the *sources* Jerome used, there is less sustained reflection on the implications for modern textual criticism of the Vulgate. For instance, what do these findings mean for the status of the Vulgate as an independent textual witness vis-à-vis the Hebrew and Septuagint traditions? While the author touches upon this, further exploration into how Jerome's use of multiple traditions affects our reading and edition of the Vulgate would enhance the book's appeal to textual critics beyond the patristic or translation-studies sphere.

In conclusion, Paul Rodrigue's *Jerome's Sources in His Translation of the Hebrew Bible* is a significant, meticulously argued, and well-written study that advances our understanding of Jerome's translation strategy, his source-base, and the multilingual context of his biblical work. Its focused case-studies, multilingual comparative method and diachronic framing render it a valuable contribution to the fields of translation history and textual criticism. This book sets a high standard for future research. Scholars of Jerome, the Vulgate, and late-antique biblical transmission will find it a study of interest.