


Recent developments in Septuagint research

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Received: 03 Apr. 2018

Accepted: 19 June 2018

Published: 27 Aug. 2018

How to cite this article:Cook, J., 2018, 'Recent developments in Septuagint research', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(3), 5002. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5002>**Copyright:**© 2018. The Authors.
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The time and opportunity have finally arrived for the next phase of Septuagint research. Even though not all the books of the LXX have been completed by the Septuaginta-Unternehmen in Göttingen, by far the largest number of books have been assigned and are being prepared. Thus, text-critical work has largely been completed, or is in the process of being prepared. The next phase, hermeneutical research, is at hand. This phase naturally requires correct methodology. This applies to an acceptable textual theory as well as to the reconstruction of the textual history of the LXX. This article takes the Septuagint of Proverbs as its point of comparison and discusses the following issues: novel research (monographs) and new research projects in conjunction with existing projects (exegetical commentaries, a theology of the Septuagint).

New monographs

Ground-breaking text-critical research on the Septuagint of Proverbs by Michael Fox

According to Fox (2000:361), LXX Proverbs is 'primarily a *translation*, one aiming at a faithful representation of the Hebrew, and it is best understood in terms of that goal'. He also thinks that it is possible to utilise this rather free translation in order to reconstruct Semitic *Vorlagen*.

The Hebrew Bible: A critical edition¹

The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition (HBCE) represents a novel paradigm for a critical (though eclectic) edition of the Hebrew Bible (Fox 2015). According to Hendel (2015:ix), this edition 'combines the best (or earliest) readings from various sources into a critical text ...'. As is well known, this is a different concept from that represented by diplomatic editions. The aim of the HBCE is 'to restore, to the extent possible, the manuscript that was the latest common ancestor of all the extant witnesses' (Hendel 2015:ix). This is a rather difficult task and raises many questions. How will the common ancestor be determined? What is the archetype? Is it different from the Urtext? Be that as it may, this is a legitimate and long overdue project, especially in the wake of the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as other recent developments in Septuagint studies (Cook 2017b:10f). The ultimate challenge of this project lies not with *why* it should be done, but with *how* it should be done – the methodology (the necessary background to this project may be found at the following website: hbceonline.org).

Michael Fox has been constructively involved in the scientific discipline of textual criticism for a long period of time. He is aware of the stumbling blocks that the text critic has to face who endeavours to unravel the textual history of the books (note the plural!) of Proverbs. 'In the case of Proverbs one cannot reasonably aim to recover the full archetype. The book is too multiplex, the resources too scanty' (Fox 2015:2). On this we agree. His ultimate goal is 'to reconstruct the corrected archetypes of biblical books' (Fox 2015:2).

Fox (2015) is clear as to what he can achieve:

I wish to be clear that the text I have produced, however successful, never had physical existence. It is a construct. It can be defined as the proto-M *as it should have been*, the text the authors and editors wanted us to read. (pp. 4–5)

Exactly the same problem pertains to the Göttingen edition of the Septuaginta-Unternehmen.

The reconstructed text of LXX Proverbs is found in Chapter 5 and is based upon Fox's preceding theoretical reflections. Some issues are problematic. The most conspicuous discrepancy is that the Hebrew text is pointed. The translator, in all probability, had a vowel-less text in front of him.

¹This paragraph is based on my review of this book, which appeared in the autumn issue (2018-07-03) of *Journal of Semitic Studies* (JSS) in 2018.

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It struck me how few retroversions appear in Chapters 1 and 8 of LXX Proverbs. In Proverbs 1:27 there is only one example, כִּשְׁפָה. It was also surprising to me in how few places Fox in fact changed the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. I remain sceptical about some of Fox's conclusions. My problem is that the text-critical value of LXX Proverbs is extremely low (Cook 2005). Its translation technique is so free, sometimes even periphrastic, that I for one would not be willing to attempt to reconstruct its Semitic *Vorlage* consistently.² Having said that, Fox has made some brilliant intuitive retroversions, the result of his first-hand knowledge of the text. He knows the text of Proverbs inside out. He was responsible for the Anchor Bible commentary on Proverbs (Fox 2000, 2009).

The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible by Natalio Fernández Marcos (translated from the Spanish by W.G.A. Watson, Brill, Leiden, 2000)

The monograph consists of five parts:

- Part 1: The Linguistic and Cultural Setting.
- Part 2: The Origins of the Septuagint.
- Part 3: The Septuagint in the Jewish Tradition.
- Part 4: The Septuagint in the Christian Tradition.
- Part 5: The Septuagint and Christian Origins.

The monograph, *inter alia*, deals with the origins of the Septuagint. It discusses its linguistic and cultural frame and its relation to the Hebrew text, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. It includes the early revisions and the Christian recessions, as well as addressing other issues such as the relation of the Septuagint to Hellenism, to the New Testament and to early Christian literature. The author departs from the premise that the Septuagint is not a translation but a *collection* of translations of the Septuagint (Fernández Marcos 2000:xi). It acts as an excellent guide to original LXX research.

Septuagint by Jennifer M. Dines (London, T&T Clark, 2003)

This book consists of seven chapters, of which Chapter 1 supplies some basic information, in order to understand contemporary scholarly debates. It also outlines the character of individual books, in connection with Septuagint studies. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the background to historical origins and the questions and issues involved, while Chapter 4 traces changing attitudes towards the Greek scriptures by Jewish and Christian authors until the fifth century CE. Chapters 5 and 6 address linguistic, translational and text-critical issues essential to understanding how the Septuagint may be understood both as a collection of Hellenistic texts and in relation to its parent text, the Hebrew Bible. Finally, Chapter 7 examines some significant contributions of the Septuagint to early biblical interpretation and stresses the importance of the Septuagint for the understanding of Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity.

These two books represent specific approaches towards the LXX, namely that the Septuagint is primarily studied *an*

2. See the criticism of Williamson (2009:153–175).

sich and not in relation to its parent text. The next book is an invitation to the LXX.

Invitation to the Septuagint, K.H. Jobes and M. Silva (Baker Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015)

This book is a reworking of a previous version, consisting of three parts, in addition to an introduction.

- Introduction – Why study the Septuagint?
- Part 1: The history of the Septuagint.
- Part 2: The Septuagint in biblical studies.
- Part 3: The current state of Septuagint Studies.

The T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint, J.K. Aitken (ed.) (T&T Clark, London, 2013)

Septuagint Studies has grown into a formidable field of research in the past two decades. This has become an area of interest not only for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), but also as a product of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman world. Renewed interest in the daughter versions (Targumim, Syriac [Peshitta], Vulgate, Ethiopic, Coptic, etc.) has focused new attention on the Septuagint. This companion provides a cutting-edge survey of scholarly opinion on the Septuagint text of each biblical book. It covers the characteristics of each Septuagint book, its translation features, origins, text-critical problems and history. As such it is a comprehensive companion to the Septuagint, featuring contributions from experts in the field under the guidance of James Aitken. This companion offers more than just the usual background: it is construed more along the lines of an introduction to the Old Testament. Three monographs deal with the Aristeas Book.

The Aristeas Book³

A legendary letter⁴ by a bureaucrat from the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphos named Aristeas mentions an important mission to the high priest in Jerusalem. It contains a request by Demetrius of Phaleron, the famous director of the Alexandrian library, for a copy of the Jewish law that was not available in the library. The king sent a letter to the high priest in Jerusalem. A delegation from the king, including Aristeas, was then sent to Jerusalem with the request to prepare a copy of the Law of Moses. After meeting the high priest, the delegation returned to Alexandria with 72 translators (six from each Israelite tribe) in order to produce a copy of the Torat Moshe. These men were learned in Jewish and Greek literature (B. Ar. par 121).

After they arrived they were entertained by Ptolemy at a banquet that lasted for 7 days. The king met every translator and put all sorts of questions to them, which all of them answered with great wisdom. Then the 72 translators were accommodated in a specially prepared house on the island of

3. This paragraph is based on my presidential address to IOSOT 2016 (Cook 2017b:13f.).

4. Honigman (2003:1) suggests that this is not a letter but, with Josephus, she defines it as a book. She suggests 'B. Ar.' as an abbreviation. See Cook and Van der Kooij (2012:134f.).

Pharos and, after 72 days, they completed their work. The translation was then read aloud to the Jewish community of Alexandria, and the translations were perfectly concordant! Clearly ideology is at stake in this regard.

This so-called Letter of Aristeas has attracted the attention of numerous scholars. Three recent publications, with different intentions, stand out.

Sylvie Honigman

In 2003 Sylvie Honigman published a monograph in which she focusses primarily on Septuagintal origins. In this study of the narrative of this book, Honigman (2003:1) proposes novel interpretations of this writing. She formulated a creative ‘working hypothesis’, namely ‘that of the complete cultural integration of the Jews into their surrounding world’.⁵ Hence she takes seriously ‘Homeric scholarship in Alexandria’. Her definition of ‘myth’ is also innovative. She deems it to be ‘political myth’, in the sense that the term is used in sociological studies (Honigman 2003:8). Her holistic approach, entailing a comprehensive and coherent (re-) reading of B. Ar., moreover, offers novel results as to the issue of the reliability of the document. B. Ar. is a diegesis that refers to a prose account of the narrative (Honigman 2003:1).

She also has a unique approach to the genre of B. Ar. and, contrary to the accepted generic description of *pseudepigraphon* for the ‘letter’ (Meisner 1999:37), she suggests that its genre should rather be defined as *historiography*, because according to her the author in fact intended it to be seen as ‘true history’,⁶ ‘a kind of historical monograph’ (Honigman 2003:31). In line with this view she sees the Aristeas book as a charter myth (Honigman 2003:39). In this context myth has nothing to do with the story being true or false but with how the readers perceive it. In her own words: ‘The original readers did regard the event told in B. Ar. as “real”. Moreover, the real difference between “history” and “myth” is one of intention and reception, not content’ (Honigman 2003:39).

For the purposes of the current article, her most important contribution lies in the formulation of a new theory on the genesis of the LXX and B. Ar. As a background to her enterprise she discusses six hypotheses (Honigman 2003:105): (1) the translation originated in a religious context (Thackaray); (2) it originated in an educational context (S.P. Brock, Albert Pietersma); (3) it is a legal text, a *nomos* (Bickerman, Stricker); (4) it was needed for the library of Alexandria; (5) it is a cultural hypothesis; (6) prestige was the primary motivation. Dorival⁷ has added a few additional theories.

5.Honigman (2003): This means that there are no grounds *a priori* that a text written by a Jew is basically different in essence from one produced by any other Hellenistic writer living in the same time and place (p. 6).

She does, nevertheless, not ignore the ‘Jewishness’ of B. Ar. She states: ‘The form is Greek but the thematic material is Jewish’ (Honigman 2003:16). She even speaks about the ‘Jewish Greekness’ of B. Ar., referring to the blend of Greek form and Jewish content (Honigman 2003:19). Other scholars have also struggled with the essence and intention of B. Ar. Matusova (2015:10) rejects the view that only a Jewish audience was intended.

6.Nina Collins (2000) also sees the B. Ar. as history.

7.Gilles Dorival (2010:36–47). See also the discussion by Wright III (2011:304–326).

Honigman favours the cultural option and, accordingly, formulates a working hypothesis, namely ‘that the early history of the LXX should be read against the background of the history of the editing of the Homeric epics in Alexandria’ (Honigman 2003:120). She proposes that its author actually followed Alexandrian literary practices and, more specifically, the text-critical work of Aristarchos on the edition of Homer in the creation of new manuscripts, as the older MSS had become inferior because they had deteriorated so badly (Honigman 2003). She speculates:

that there was dissatisfaction with the LXX Pentateuch in the days of B. Ar. However, the cause for the dissatisfaction could have been the poor state of the manuscripts and not the quality of the translation achieved by the original translators. (p. 127)

Honigman’s arguments are innovative but not compelling. She too easily draws parallels between Alexandrian literary practices and the B. Ar. There is, for instance, no clear evidence that text-critical considerations played a role in the construing of the B. Ar.

Benjamin Wright III

In 2015 Benjamin Wright III analyses the material of the Aristeas letter in Volume 8 of the commentary series on Jewish literature. Wright III is clear about the fact that his commentary is not aimed at addressing historical questions concerning Septuagintal origins or the nature of the Alexandrian Jewish community (Wright III 2015:6). These issues are dealt with in a separate publication (Wright III 2011:304–326). This commentary is a first of its kind and provides indispensable background to the intent and ideology of the B. Ar.

Ekaterina Matusova

The same year saw the appearance of Ekaterina Matusova’s book. Matusova, firstly, addresses structural issues – the composition of the narrative; secondly, the meaning of grammatical terminology in the story of the translation; thirdly, the historical implications of the narrative; and finally, religious policies of the Ptolemaic era.

Aristeas has been linked to the origins of the Septuagint by various scholars.⁸ Whereas Paul de Lagarde related the description of the law in Aristeas to the origins of the LXX, Paul Kahle (1959:211) traced its origins to later recensional activities.

To return to the issue of a suitable paradigm to account for Septuagintal origins, I agree with Pietersma (2002:337–364) that the educational model⁹ is the most likely hypothesis to apply. The school-setting hypothesis was suggested by Brock (1979) and worked out more systematically by Pietersma (2002:337–364). Pietersma (2002:349–350) has indicated that

8.See Fernández Marcos (2000:35); Dines (2004:27); Jellicoe (1993:29) and Jobes and Silva (eds) (2000:33). See also Sollamo (2001:329–342).

9.See Dorival’s (2010:43) critique of this theory. See also the doctoral dissertation by Boyd-Taylor (2005).

the LXX originally probably had an educational intent and not a religious one and that it acted as a school-text crib to educate students, as was done with Homer (Pietersma 2002:349–350). According to this interpretation, Aristeas does not refer directly to this datum. In this regard it is helpful to mention Brock's analysis of the Septuagint, because it 'has convinced him that the textual-linguistic nature of the translation indicates that it tries to bring the reader to the original, not the original to the reader (Wright III 2006:52)'. Thus, from the textual-linguistic make-up of the LXX, it is clear that there was originally a relationship of dependence between the Hebrew and the Greek. The Greek is, after all, a translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic.

This relationship of dependence, however, changed over time and, as a matter of fact, Aristeas assumes that the Septuagint was intended to be a free-standing and independent replacement for the Hebrew Pentateuch.¹⁰ To be sure, a shift in the intention of the Septuagint is observed. In this regard the work by Toury (1995:30) is significant. This is in fact what happened to the Septuagint: its function changed from the original dependence on the Semitic parent text 'without experiencing any modification of its textual-linguistic make-up' (Wright III 2006:52).

Wright is correct in concluding that:

[t]he Letter of Aristeas offers a justification, a myth of origins, for what the Septuagint has become by the author's time, and it had become two things that it probably was not in the beginning: *independent and scriptural*. (p. 52, [author's own italics])¹¹

The books mentioned above are tremendously helpful and popular as resources for study and research.

Current research projects

I mention only the most prominent ones:¹² A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) (Pietersma and Wright III, Toronto), the John William Wevers Institute for Septuagint Studies (Rob Hiebert, Langley, Canada), La Bible d'Alexandrie (Madame Harl, Paris), the Institute for Textual Criticism (Hans Ausloos, Louvain-la-Neuve – Bénédicte Lemmelijn, Leuven), LXX.D (Wolfgang Kraus, Saarbrücken, and Martin Karrer, Wuppertal), CATSS (Computer Assisted Tools for Septuagint Studies) (Emanuel Tov, Jerusalem, and Robert Kraft, Philadelphia). These projects have extensive websites, which should be visited (see, e.g., CATSS at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rak/catss.html>).

10. Wright III (2006:50). See also Wright III (2015): By the time of Aristeas' composition during the second century BCE, the Septuagint had indeed become separated from its parent text, and Jews regarded it as their sacred scripture, an independent replacement for their parent text (p. 14).

Thus the composition of B. Ar. took place considerably later than the translation into Greek of the Pentateuch (Wright III 2015:28).

11. Wright III (2006:57). See also Honigman (2003:8): 'He aimed at endowing the LXX with a charter myth about its origins, with the purpose of giving the LXX the status of a sacred text.'

12. At the website of the IOSCS more projects are referred to.

New research projects

The necessity of exegetical commentaries¹³

The Septuagint and Cognate Studies (SCS) series can be consulted at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) website. A prominent publication is *The SBL Commentary on the Septuagint: An Introduction*, edited by Dirk Buchner (2017, Society of Biblical Literature Commentary Series (SBLCS) (number/volume 67).

Commentaries in the SBLCS adhere to five guiding principles: the original text as the basis for interpretation; the original meaning of the text as the goal of interpretation; the parent text as the primary context for interpretation; the text itself as the only source for determining a translator's intent; and the wider Greek-language corpus as the sole basis for identifying normal (and abnormal) Greek constructions. In keeping with these five principles, each SBLCS volume will, in addition to addressing standard introductory issues, offer a detailed commentary on individual pericopes, including a summary of a pericope's contents, discussion of interpretive questions pertaining to the entire passage, bibliography, a critical edition of the Greek text, a Hebrew text, the NETS translation and a verse-by-verse commentary on the pericope. (For further details on the content and structure of the commentaries, see <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ioscs/commentary/prospectus.html>.)

The Septuagint version of Proverbs is a relatively fallow field of research. The Old Greek (OG) text of this freely rendered version, for instance, has not been determined. The pocket edition by Rahlfs must therefore suffice, as I argued at the 15th meeting of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS) in a paper entitled 'Between Text and Interpretation: An Exegetical Commentary on LXX Proverbs'. The phrase 'Between Text and Interpretation' in the title is a reference to the translation technique followed by the translator, which varies from 'literal' to 'free'.

The aspects addressed in the SBL series are listed below.

Date, provenance, authorship and questions of unity

Whereas there is general consensus that the original Septuagint, the Pentateuch, should be located in Egypt and, more specifically, Alexandria,¹⁴ there is a difference of opinion on those books outside of this corpus (Tov 2010:4). I am of the opinion that LXX Proverbs came to be in Palestine, most probably in Jerusalem, in the wake of the Antiochean crisis (Cook & Van der Kooij 2012:164).

Literary character and contents

Structure of the book or structural relationship to the Masoretic Text: One of the characteristics of LXX Proverbs is the different order of some of its chapters *vis-à-vis* the

13. The examples of research quoted here are not exhaustive. The recently completed monograph by Christo van der Merwe, in collaboration with J.A. Naudé and J.H. Kroeze (2017), is an important grammatical project in this regard.

14. Van der Kooij (1983:64–74) has argued that perhaps Leontopolis could be seen as the location for some LXX books.

Masoretic Text (MT) and other textual witnesses from Chapter 24 onwards. Scholars have divergent views on this issue. I have argued that some of the differences in the order of these chapters are the result of the translator interpreting his parent text.¹⁵ Some scholars accept that these differences in word order are the result of deviating Semitic parent texts (Tov 1990:43–56). This seems to me to be circular argumentation.

Literary and/or translational profile: It is evident that the translator had an excellent Greek education. D’Hamonville (2000:57–112) demonstrates his competence on the level of the literary dimension and poetics. There is also consensus that this unit exhibits a rather free translation technique (Tov and Wright III 1985:186).

Themes and major concerns of the author–translator(s): The fact that this unit reveals a rather free translation technique, and that some chapters are even changed for literary and religious considerations, is an indication that the translator deemed other issues more significant than what is at hand in the parent text.

Textual relationship to the parent text(s): I hold the view that the LXX of Proverbs was indeed translated from a parent text not dramatically different from the Masoretic text (cf. also Tauberschmidt (2004:19) and D’Hamonville (2000)).¹⁶ Because of the free translation technique followed by the translator, it is also extremely difficult to determine the Semitic *Vorlage*. I have demonstrated that the text-critical value of LXX Proverbs is extremely low (Cook 2005:338), making it practically impossible to retrovert the parent text.

Text and text history: *Printed editions of the Greek:* LXX Proverbs is one of the books not yet prepared in the Göttingen edition. It has been allocated to Peter Gentry, but it will take several years before this edition is available for research. In the meantime, the pocket edition of Rahlfs (1965) will have to do. There are, however, problems connected to the Rahlfs edition, which is based on a limited number of available MSS.¹⁷

State of the text: The text of LXX Proverbs seems to be riddled with textual problems (Cook 2000). Firstly, there is ample evidence of hexaplaric insertions into the text. Secondly, it remains difficult to determine whether a given passage is indeed part of this later revisional activity. The rules of thumb formulated by De Lagarde (1863:49) are helpful.

Textual history: In a monograph in *Vetus Testamentum Supplementum* (VTS) 69 I have endeavoured to reconstruct the OG of some chapters. This information will also be dealt

15. See Cook (2003:610), Cook (1998:310–315), as well as my contribution to the proceedings of IOSCS in Oslo 1998 (Cook 2001:463–479).

16. D’Hamonville (2000:57) also thinks that the translator adopted a rather free hand in the construction of Proverbs: *Ces deux exemples sont typique de la nécessité d’étudier les Proverbe LXX comme un véritable texte et non comme la copie plus ou moins aberrante d’un modèle hébreu suppose intangible*. Like myself, he also accepts that the parent text of LXX Proverbs was not very different from MT.

17. It can be deemed a semi-critical edition.

with in the commentary. In this monograph I gave a cursory outline of the text history of this book (Cook 1998:20–29).

Non-Septuagint Greek traditions: There is evidence that the translator made use of non-Septuagintal Greek traditions. He was clearly a well-educated scribe, well versed in Greek literature. He made abundant use of *hapax legomena* and neologisms, a clear sign of his proficiency in Greek culture, at least as far as the form is concerned. He also had knowledge of Aristotle’s *Historia animalium*, as is seen in the additions in Chapter 6:8 (Cook 1998:164). He was clearly steeped in Greek (and Jewish) culture (Cook 2018)!

History of scholarship and bibliography: I have already dealt with the history of research in LXX Proverbs (Cook 1998:3–12). This book has not received concentrated attention in scholarship. However, during recent decades there has been progressively more interest in this book, as is true of the whole of the Septuagint.

Sigla and abbreviations: Quoted from existing lists.

The need for formulating a theology or theologies of the individual Septuagint books¹⁸

Scholars differ on the question of whether it is necessary, and indeed possible, to formulate a theology of the Septuagint (Cook 2017b). I have argued that this is indeed both necessary and possible (Cook 2017a). I also suggested that exegetical commentaries are a prerequisite for the formulation of a theology of the Septuagint (Cook 2017a:13). However, I also agree that this is perhaps a somewhat idealistic view (Cook 2017b:15). It is important to take into account a number of aspects when attempting to formulate a theology of the Septuagint (Cook 2017a:14).

Firstly, the diversity of the Septuagint should be taken seriously. The OG is not a unity. Each translated unit should be dealt with independently. Secondly, such a theology should only be formulated in conjunction with the Old Greek text. The reception of the LXX should be dealt with separately.¹⁹

Thirdly, this formulation must be diachronic in nature. There is not just one theology and it is possible that each book will present a different perspective. The individual books should act as guidelines as to how ‘LXX theologies’ should be formulated. As stated above, the diversity of the books of the Septuagint should be honoured. This is underscored by Rösel’s (2006) first conclusion that:

A ‘Theology’ of the Septuagint cannot be based on the levelling of differences among the individual books or the specific profiles of the translators for the sake of a common edifice of ideas.²⁰ (p. 240)

18. This paragraph is based on my presidential address at IOSOT 2016; see Cook (2017b:14f.).

19. However, see Rösel (2018), who takes later revisions into account. See also Cook (2010).

20. Rösel (2006:240). In another context he speaks about *implizite Theologie der griechischen Übersetzungen* in this regard (Rösel 2018).

Another issue is that a 'theology' (theologies?) of the LXX should be more than, and hence different from, what is formulated in a theology of the Hebrew Bible. Because the LXX is translational literature (Boyd-Taylor 2005) and inherently represents an interpretation of these Semitic texts, such a theology should be comparative in nature, as suggested by Joosten (2000:33).

It is not desirable to systematise the various theological perspectives to be located in each individual book at this stage. Rather, each chapter of each book should be analysed on the basis of an exegetical commentary (Buchner 2016) and then interpreted.

Another issue is whether any distinction should be made between the OG and Hebrew *Vorlagen* or not, as suggested by Douglas (2012). However, Rösel (2018) is correct to argue that such distinct readings should be preserved.

As stated above, I deem it possible and necessary to formulate a theology (or more correctly, theologies) of the individual Septuagintal books. In this regard an appropriate methodology is essential (Cook 2017a). Hence the OG texts should be the basis of this formulation. There should also be no uncertainty about the fact that 'theological/exegetical' perspectives occur throughout the Septuagint (OG). Rösel²¹ and Schaper (2006) have provided a multitude of examples. The problem, however, remains how to interpret these perspectives. I would therefore suggest that formulating theologies of the Septuagint should be the next step, that is, after the current phase of the writing of exegetical commentaries²² has been completed.

The application of Greek cultural traditions in the Septuagint is another issue to be discussed. Scholars differ about this contentious issue. Evangelia Dafni²³ is probably the most outspoken propagator of correspondences between the Semitic text of Genesis 1–10, the Hellenistic world²⁴ and the classical world of Plato. However, recently a monograph appeared entitled *Plato and the Creation of the Hebrew Bible* (Gmerkin 2017). This book compares, apparently for the first time, the ancient law collections of the Ancient Near East, the Greeks and the Pentateuch to determine the legal antecedents for the biblical laws. Connecting with his previous work, *Berosus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus*, published in 2006, Gmerkin takes up his theory that the Pentateuch was written around 270 BCE using Greek sources found at the Great Library of Alexandria and applies this to an examination of the biblical law codes. In the process he detects a striking number of legal parallels between the Pentateuch and Athenian laws. He speculates that these correspond with those found in Plato's *Laws* of circa 350 BCE. Other features in

21. His suggestions concerning the difference in terminology used in the LXX to describe the true cult of Israel contrasted to the pagan cults of the *Umwelt* (Rösel 2006:248) are convincing.

22. See Cook (2016:649–666). As stated earlier this is perhaps a too-idealistic position.

23. See her contribution to my Festschrift (Gauthier et al. 2016:1–30).

24. See the discussion by Karrer (2016:3–34). See also the discussion by Adrian Schenker (2010:23–35).

biblical law, Athenian law and Plato's *Laws* also reveal close correspondences. Several genres of biblical law, including the Decalogue, according to Gmerkin, bear striking parallels with Greek legal collections. Finally, the synthesis of narrative and legal content is shown to be compatible with Greek literature.

According to Gmerkin, this evidence points to the direct influence of Greek writings, especially Plato's *Laws*, on the biblical legal tradition. Finally, it is argued that the creation of the Hebrew Bible took place according to the programme found in Plato's *Laws* for creating a legally authorised national ethical literature, reinforcing the importance of this specific Greek text to the authors of the Torah and Hebrew Bible in the early Hellenistic era. It is immediately clear that Gmerkin's theories are innovative but highly speculative and should be approached with the necessary caution.

International congresses

To end this elementary overview I briefly refer to the places where the results of LXX research are presented and tested.

International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies congresses

The IOSCS is a non-profit learned society established to promote international research in, and study of, the Septuagint and related texts. Meetings are held annually in conjunction with the SBL and triennially with the IOSOT (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ioscs/congress/>). The IOSCS publishes an annual journal, the *Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies*. The current editor is Prof. Dr Siegfried Kreuzer (Protestant University Wuppertal/Bethel). Under the auspices of the Society of Biblical Literature, the IOSCS also publishes a monograph series, of which Prof. Dr Wolfgang Kraus is the editor (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ioscs/scs/>).

Wuppertal conferences of LXX.DEUTSCH

The Septuagint has been researched exhaustively in Germany under the auspices of the Septuaginta Deutsch, which has been operating since 1999. The LXX.D, as it is known, is edited by Prof. Dr Wolfgang Kraus (Saarbrücken) and Prof. Dr Martin Karrer (Wuppertal), along with nine further co-editors. Like NETS, LXX.D is based upon the Göttingen Septuaginta where available, and where the Rahlfs pocket edition is not used.

The actual translation comprises one volume, which includes short footnotes and other possibilities of understanding, but also quotes the orthodox readings. An additional two volumes provide a commentary by the scholars who translated the Greek into German, discussing their work.

LXX.D has successfully organised a biannual congress at the Kirchliche Hochschule in Wuppertal since 2006. Every second year specialists from all over the globe are invited and meet for five days in order to present papers and discuss aspects of different topics of the Septuagint. The proceedings of these

congresses are meticulously published in the prominent series *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*. The following collections are now available:

- *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten* (2006)
- *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Theologien, Einflüsse* (2008)
- *Die Septuaginta – Entstehung, Sprache, Geschichte* (2010)
- *Die Septuaginta – Text, Wirkung, Reception* (2012)
- *Die Septuaginta – Orte und Intentionen* (2014)
- *Die Septuaginta – Geschichte, Wirkung, Relevanz* (2016).

In addition to these publications LXX.D has more research projects running. *Das Handbuch Deutsch* (LXX.H) is one example. It connects logically and chronologically with LXX.D (German translation) and LXX.E (the commentary volumes of the translation). LXX.H presents an overarching perspective on all the research fields of LXX research, and the plan is, ultimately, to prepare eight volumes. The first volume has just been edited by another prominent member of the LXX.D project, Prof. Dr Siegfried Kreuzer. It concerns the ‘theology’ of the LXX.D. Its editors are Prof. Hans Ausloos (Louvain-la-Neuve) and Bénédicte Lemmelijn (KU Leuven). This part has nine smaller subsections, including an introduction by the editors and a section entitled *Der Mensch vor Gott* by Johann Cook from Stellenbosch. Another one is entitled *Weisheit und der Mensch vor Gott* by Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger from Vienna.²⁵

Ad hoc conferences

The Septuagint has been researched in South Africa for a long time. A formal association, entitled LXXSA, was formed in 2007. Johann Cook, Gert Steyn and Pierre Jordaan formed the first executive. This association has presented a number of international conferences at different venues in South Africa (e.g. Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Potchefstroom). The proceedings of these symposia have been published in various prominent international series. The Brill-based VTS is an example, of which two publications are J. Cook (ed.), *Septuagint and Reception, Vetus Testamentum Supplementum (VTS) 127*; Leiden, Brill, 2009 and J. Cook & H.J. Stipp (eds), *Text-critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint*, VTS 157, Leiden, Brill, 2012. A second series is Deuterocanonical Cognate Literature Studies (DCLS) published by P.J. Jordaan & N.P.L. Allen (eds), *Construction, Coherence Connotations: Studies on the Septuagint, Apocalyptic and Cognate Literature*. DCLY 34, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016. Other periodicals are *JSem* and *Acta Patristica et Byzantina*. The following local scholars regularly present papers and have their papers in these publications: Annette Evans, Gerhard Swart, Helen Keith-Van Wyk, Gert Steyn, Ronald van der Berg, Peter Nagel, Chris de Wet, Herrie van Rooy, Pierre Jordaan, Nicholas Allen, Dich Kanonge, Gideon Kotzé, Eugene Coetzer, Cynthia-Miller Naude and Jacobus Naude, Johann Cook and Larry Lincoln. Occasionally, international scholars also participate: Hans Ausloos, Wolfgang Kraus, Martin Karrer, Siegfried Kreuzer, Jan Joosten, Arie van der Kooij, William Loader and so on.

25. I thank Martin Meiser for reading these paragraphs.

Ad hoc publications

The following publications were recently published:

- J. de Vries & M. Karrer, *Textual History and the Reception of Scripture in Early Christianity: Textgeschichte und Schriftrezeption im frühen Christentum*, SBLSCS 60, SBL, Atlanta, GA, 2013.
- S. Kreuzer, *The Bible in Greek: Translation, Transmission, and Theology of the Septuagint*, SBLSCS 63, SBL, Atlanta, GA, 2015.

A number of *Festschriften* have recently been published of colleagues involved in the Septuagint:

- R.J.V. Hiebert, C.E. Cox & P. Gentry (eds), *The Old Greek Psalter – Studies in Honour of Albert Pietersma*, Sheffield University Press, Sheffield, 2001.
- S.M. Paul, R.A. Kraft, L.H. Schiffman & W.W. Fields (eds), *Emanuel – Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and dead sea scrolls in honor of Emanuel Tov*, Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2003.
- F. García Martínez & M. Vervenne (eds), *Interpreting translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in honour of Johan Lust*, University Press/uitgeverij Peeters, Leuven-Paris-Dudley, MA Leuven, 2005.
- R.L. Troxel, K.G. Friebel & D.R. Magary (eds), *Seeking out the wisdom of the ancients: Essays in honor of Michael V. Fox on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, Eisenbrauns: Winona Lake, IN, 2005.
- B. Lemmelijn, H. Ausloos & M. Vervenne (eds), *Florilegium Lovaniense: Studies in Septuagint and textual criticism in honour of Florentino García Martínez*, BETL 224, Peeters, Leuven, 2008.
- M.N. van der Meer, P. van Keulen, P. van Peursen & B. Ter Haar Romeny (eds), *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, VTS 138, Brill, Leiden, 2010.
- H. Ausloos & B. Lemmelijn (eds), *A pillar of cloud to guide: Text-critical, redactional, and linguistic perspectives on the Old Testament in Honour of Marc Vervenne*, BETL 269, Peeters, Leuven, 2014.
- R.X. Gauthier, G.J. Steyn & G.R. Kotzé (eds), *Septuagint, sages, and scripture – Studies in honor of Johann Cook*, VTS172, Brill, Leiden, 2016.
- T. Wagner, J.M. Robker & F. Ueberschau (eds), *Text – Textgeschichte – Textwirkung Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Siegfried Kreuzer*, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster, 2014.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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