

Luca Pedroli (ed.), *L'analogia nuziale nella Scrittura. Saggi in onore di Luis Alonso Schökel* [*The Nuptial Analogy in the Holy Scriptures. Essays in Honor of Luis Alonso Schökel*] (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana – Pontificio Istituto Biblico 2019). Pp. 160. € 23. ISBN 978-88-7653-721-9

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The Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical Biblical Institute edited, by prof. Luca Pedroli, a commemorative book in honor of the outstanding biblical scholar prof. Luis Alonso Schökel, which includes six essays, the results of the International Scientific Conference organized on November 9, 2017 at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of his lectures at that academy (1957) and the twentieth anniversary of his death in Salamanca, 10 July 1998.

The topic of the Conference and the book discussed here are not accidental, as they refer to the subject of the last work of Luis Alonso Schökel entitled *Marriage symbols in the Bible*.¹

As it is known, the most important achievements of this outstanding biblical scholar include: the development of an original and currently shared by many theologians concept of biblical inspiration (his basic work on this subject, *The Inspired Word* has been published in Polish²), preparation of a textbook of Hebrew poetics, a comprehensive Hebrew-Spanish dictionary, translation of the Holy Scriptures into Spanish (*La Biblia del Peregrino*³) and numerous scientific and journalistic publications in the field of biblical studies.

The preface to the book was written by prof. Michael Francis Kolarcik, rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. He focused not so much on the achievements of the outstanding biblical scholar, which are well known, but rather on his personal profile and his own memories. Luis Alonso Schökel was not a per-

1 L.A. Schökel, *Símbolos matrimoniales en la Biblia* (Estella: Verbo Divino 1997).

2 L.A. Schökel, *La palabra inspirada. La Biblia a la luz de la ciencia del lenguaje* (Barcelona: Herder 1966), 3 ed. (Madrid: Cristiandad 1986); Polish trans. A. Malewski: *Słowo natchnione. Pismo święte w świetle nauki o języku* (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne 1983).

3 L.A. Schökel (ed.), *Biblia del Peregrino* (Bilbao: EGA – Mensajero 1993), 6 ed. (Bilbao: Mensajero 2001).

fectionist – writes Kolarcik – he loved spontaneity, intuitiveness and creativity. He was passionate about fiction and playing the piano. Tall, always upright. When Christmas was celebrated in the community of the Jesuit religious house in which he lived, and each member of the confreres was given the characteristics of an animal at Jesus' manger, no one had any doubts about Luis, he was associated with ... a giraffe.

For me, as the author of the review, the figure of Luis Alonso Schökel is also particularly close. When I started my studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in the late 1980s, he was already surrounded by legend. Crowds of students came to his lectures, although not all of them chose them as part of their studies. It's no secret that as an examiner he was considered strict. I especially remember the series of lectures on the biblical paradigm of liberation. It was a particularly hot topic at the time. It inspired many young South American theologians involved in the pro-poor paradigm. At the same time, there were many hierarchs who did not understand the biblical and existential basis of liberation theology, reducing it to a Marxist-Christian melange. Luis Alonso Schökel, with his own broad theological perspective and erudition, explained the biblical pericopes that formed the basis of this very promising trend in theology.

When, at the end of the preparatory year, I was about to conduct the so-called "Lectio exegetica," it turned out that Luis Alonso Schökel was appointed chairman of the examination committee. I received the prologue of the book of Qohelet as the subject. After an exegetical analysis, questions from the committee followed. I remember that at the end of the discussion summing up my speech, Luis Alonso Schökel asked tricky: –"I wonder what your great compatriot Nicolaus Copernicus would say when he heard that Qohelet unambiguously states that 'the sun is going to the place from which it will rise' (Eccl 1:5)?" To the question of the chairman of the commission, I replied with another question: –"And does Qohelet state anything unambiguously?" Luis Alonso Schökel smiled and concluded: "I like that answer. I have no more questions."

Returning to the reviewed publication, apart from the "Preface" by Michael Francis Kolarcik, the essays are preceded by the "Introduction" by Renzo Bonetti, chairman of the Foundation of the Great Gift of the Family (Fondazione Famiglia Dono Grande), which collaborated in the publication of the book. The author presented the basic goals of the foundation.

The author of the first essay is Gianantonio Borgonovo, professor at the Faculty of Theology of Northern Italy (Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Settentrionale) in Milan. The text presented by him is entitled "The Source of the Spousal Symbol in Israel's prophetism" (Le fonti del simbolo sponsale nel profetismo di Israele; pp. 14-28).

The article explores the sources of nuptial symbolism across the Hebrew Bible, noting a general tendency to monogamy, and a symbolism (Hos 2; Jer 2;

Ezek 16; Isa 54) developed even from the pre-exilic period to indicate not only a profound relationship between man and woman, but more profoundly between Israel and God. The peculiar connection between Song of Songs and Deuteronomy 32 (Moses' Song) witnesses to the way love became thematic for Israel's self-identity, God covenantally arranging the overall course of history, human beings living as symbolic expressions of this love through time.

The next article was written by Gianni Barbiero, professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and is entitled: "The Marriage of the King. The Spousal Metaphor in Ps 45" (*Le nozze del re: la metafora sponsale nel Sal 45; pp. 29-53*).

Barbiero argues that Psalm 45 is not written as an allegory, but rather as a description of human marriage which becomes metaphorically extended into an image of God's love for his people Israel. Where some critics have seen vv. 11-16 as later insertions, the Psalm makes sense as a unity in its original form, synthesizing the themes of love and war (as does the Song of Songs, with which numerous parallels and contrasts are drawn out), and invoking typical imagery associated with a royal ideology. Its final redaction within the Psalter and in the title (v.1) point to its appropriation within the Jewish sapiential tradition.

Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, professor at the University of Vienna, is the author of the third essay in the book. Its title is "Love, Friendship, Marriage, and Sexuality in the Song of Solomon. Exegetical, Anthropological and Theological Aspects" (*Amore, amicizia, matrimonio e sessualità nel Cantico dei Cantici. Aspetti esegetici, antropologici e teologici; pp. 55-66*).

Schwienhorst-Schönberger surveys various biblical traditions regarding the figure of Solomon, especially in Song of Songs 8:11-12, the Book of Qohelet and various redactional traditions. Solomon is alternatively treated in critical and praiseworthy terms, the former due to his intermarriages (which become linked to Israel's idolatry), the latter due to some strands of tradition regarding him as a proto-messianic figure. Within this matrix, one can see the scriptural authors affirming an ideal of personal versus hedonistic love, a helpful corrective and complement to contemporary popular ideas and psychological theories.

Professor at the University of St. Damasus in Madrid, Luis Sánchez Navarro devoted his essay to the following topic: "Jesus, the Messiah Bridegroom. The Testimony of the Synoptics" (*Gesù, il messia sposo. La testimonianza dei sinottici; pp. 67-91*).

The article develops central features of nuptial Christology found in the Synoptic gospels. Old Testament background is introduced for a new reading of the "sandals" which John the Baptist is unworthy to untie (cf. Deut 25:5-10), and spousal imagery in Hosea and Isaiah; the familial implications of the "hyioi tou nymfōnos" (Matt 9:15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5,34-35) are explored; and special attention is given to Matthew's parables of the Wedding Banquet (22:1-14) and

the Ten Virgins (25:1-13), which point to an eschatological bridal feast between Jesus the Bridegroom and his bride, the latter by implication associated with John the Baptist, the “sons of the banquet,” the invitees and the ten virgins.

Harold Attridge, professor at the Divinity School at Yale University, presented the results of his research in an article entitled: “What Did Jesus Do at the Wedding Feast? Notes on the Episode at Cana in Galilee” (*Cosa faceva Gesù ad un matrimonio? Considerazioni sull’episodio di Cana*; pp. 93-120).

Acknowledging the wide array of interpretative options for the Wedding at Cana (John 2), Attridge suggests the setting is key: it strikes a positive note for the institution of marriage (cf. with other strands of early Christian thought), and showcases the new relationships Jesus brings about through personal encounter and transformation. The latter occurs throughout the Fourth Gospel – the Samaritan woman, Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalen, Jesus’ Mother and the beloved disciple at the Cross – highlighting how Jesus constitutes a new supernatural family from ordinary human relationships, needs and desires.

The last essay included in the festschrift is by the editor of the publication, Luca Pedroli, professor of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and is entitled: “Theory of the *nymphagogue* and the Significant Case Eph 5:25,27” (*La teoria del *ninfagogo* e il caso emblematico di Eph 5,25-27*; pp. 121-152).

The article presents a detailed analysis of the “friend of the Bridegroom” figure (Aram. *shoshbin*; Gr. *nymphagogos/paranymphos*) familiar to rabbinic sources, and explicit in John 3:29. Describing the duties of the figure – preparing the bride for the wedding, but also other privileged responsibilities – Pedroli explores the role’s theological dimensions in Scripture and in rabbinic and Patristic sources. While John the Baptist and Paul seem to see themselves in the role (John 3,29; 2 Cor 11,2), God himself appears to take the office too (Eph 5:25-27; Isa 54; Ezek 16), with rich sacramental and eschatological implications (Eph 5:25-27; Rev 1:4-8).

At the end of the book we also find the “Afterword” by a longtime lecturer at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Jean Louis Ska. He sketched a personal and evocative picture of Luis Alonso Schökel. He compared his exegetical work to impressionism. The imagination and sensitivity that create new worlds and arouse new experiences characterized his exegetical approach. And the Holy Scriptures – as he himself used to say – can be compared to a musical score. It is not music in itself yet. It needs a virtuoso who will turn it into art. Likewise, the Bible needs each of us.