

Sebastiano Pinto, *Sapienza. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento* (I libri biblici. Primo Testamento 34; Cinisello Balsamo: Paoline 2022). Pp. 420. € 49. ISBN 978-88-315-5189-2

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The Book of Wisdom still remains a work with many mysteries to uncover. The in-depth study of this book, initiated in the 1970s, resulted in many discoveries and helped to reveal the theological richness of this book, which, as chronologically the last book of the Old Testament, already contained many truths that the New Testament would later reveal. This was due to the fact that the time of the book's composition was very close to the birth of Jesus Christ. The new research shows not only the author's deep roots in the Israelite tradition but also his openness to Hellenistic culture, especially philosophy and literature, and his wise updating of the Old Testament message in the different cultural context of ancient Alexandria in Egypt. Despite these advances, the study of the Book of Wisdom is not the most developed one in biblical theology and exegesis, hence any monograph or article on this book is valuable.

Sebastiano Pinto's commentary is noteworthy because it was written by an author who had to confront his work with good commentaries written in Italian while seeking to preserve the originality of his approach. The author of the commentary is a lecturer in Old Testament exegesis at the Theological Faculty of Apulia in Bari. He studied biblical sciences at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, concluding with a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture in 2000. He obtained a doctorate at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 2003. In addition to his exegetical work, he is involved in the biblical apostolate as an appointee of the Italian Episcopal Conference. He is the author of numerous scholarly and popular works on sapiential and biblical literature (he has published 10 books and more than 40 biblical articles). He has written, i.a., *I segreti della Sapienza* (2013), *L'incantatore di serpenti. Il sapiente secondo Qoèlet* (2014) or *Proverbi e Siracide* (2019). Taking up the task of writing a commentary in the series published by Paoline, he faced the challenging task of publishing a commentary practically in parallel with a commentary by Luca Mazzinghi (*Libro della Sapienza. Introduzione – traduzione – commento* [Analecta Biblica 3; Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2020]), who is recognised as an authority in the study of chronologically the last book of the Old Testament.

In the first part of the commentary (pp. 9–53), the author addresses the preliminary issues concerning the book. He examines the classic themes of a general introduction to the book, i.e. issues of title, author, style, literary genres, structure and content of the book, and briefly analyses the most relevant theological themes. He devotes considerable space to the relationship between the book and the Old Testament, distinguishing possible theological and literary contacts with the Pentateuch, the Prophets and other Scriptures. He also examines the relationship between the book and the New Testament, especially St Paul, and the person of Christ and His relationship with the persecuted righteous man in Wis 2. The introduction seems to be comprehensive, although it does not separately mention the chapter on the influence of Hellenism on Pseudo-Solomon. Comparing the introduction written by Pinto with other studies of this type, one discovers that Mazzinghi devotes 10 pages to this topic, while in the commentary by Bogdan Poniży, published in Polish in the *Nowy Komentarz Biblijny* series (a parallel commentary published by the Paulines in Poland), devotes 12 pages (pp. 78–89) to the impact of Hellenism on the theology of the book. At the present stage of knowledge, this problem seems extremely important, because it reveals an important literary and philosophical background that has not previously been so strongly emphasised or studied. The influence of Hellenism on the author and his dialogue with Hellenistic culture are nowadays widely recognised, and many authors seek to show and expose this influence in order to reflect the thought of the author who, while being faithful to the tradition of the Fathers, never dismissed the contemporary world with which he dialogued and for which he updated the biblical message.

The second part of the study (pp. 55–321) is a translation and commentary on the individual pericopes of the Book of Wisdom. The author proposes his own translation of the text, which departs from the official CEI translation (2008), capturing the various theological nuances developed in publications on the Wisdom of Solomon and attempting to make the language more accessible to the contemporary reader. He also adds notes on selected Greek words to the translation, providing their different meanings, highlighting the frequent occurrence of numerous *hapax legomena* and showing possible differences between manuscripts and translations (especially Latin, but also Syriac). In the division of the pericopes, he does not always follow the study by Paolo Bizzeti, who has convincingly arranged the structure of the book and the division into individual literary units, but often combines them into larger sections easier for the reader to understand (e.g. he translates and explains verses 1:1–15 together, although 1:1–5; 6–10; 11–12; 13–15 can be distinguished). The exegetical and theological commentary itself follows the line of well-known studies, analysing the Greek expressions and presenting their interpretation, referring to the Old Testament and citing numerous parallel texts. He also raises issues related to Stoic philosophy and Hellenism in general (for example, section 2:1–5, where terms related to the world of philosophy are explained, although the influence of Hellenism does not seem to be a primary issue in his commentary). In general, the comments are theologically lucid and follow from the analysis of the text. The author seeks to make the text clear to the reader and to give clear guidance for interpretation.

The third part (pp. 321–376) is the theological message, which the author groups according to selected themes. He raises issues that are interesting and present in theological discussion, such as the problem of resurrection in the Book of Wisdom, the critique of idolatry as the source of all evil, or the question of the human-technology relationship. Two excursuses also appear in this section, as each of the four themes examined is presented from a biblical perspective, sometimes with references to the New Testament.

The theological themes are followed by questions of the book's position in the canon and the history of its interpretation (pp. 359–368), which is somewhat surprising. It seems that these topics are more suited to the introductory section and should be in the first part of the commentary. A small glossary of biblical terms also appears here (there are 13 in total), which shows the specific understanding of terms such as: Hades, soul, immortality in the Book of Wisdom, among others. The idea is remarkable because some terms have a meaning specific only to the Book of Wisdom. It seems that this dictionary could be expanded to include expressions such as food of ambrosia, personification of Wisdom or virtue, as they too are specific to the Book of Wisdom.

The author then provides some key bibliographical items with a brief commentary and evaluation of each study (the so-called *bibliografia ragionata*) and a bibliography where, without division, he lists all relevant studies in alphabetical order (ca. 150 items) (pp. 386–399). The commentary also includes an index of cited contemporary authors and biblical and extra-biblical citations, and a philological index, where it lists only the most important Hebrew and Greek terms on two pages (pp. 415–416).

Pinto's commentary is written in a lucid style. Inspired by other commentaries, the author creates a work that seeks to show the theological message of the Book of Wisdom, often giving explanations of a general nature so that the message of the book is better placed in the biblical context (cf. p. 230, where he shows the specificity of the image of a punishing God against the background of Old Testament history). He not only undertakes an analysis of words and concepts, but also includes a brief theological message of the passage being explained at the end of each section. In the commentary he refers to numerous articles and studies, with which he is also able to polemicise. Certain theological questions remain open and await final resolution, such as the nature of the judgement in Wis 6:21 (the author considers it to be an ethical judgement on earth, while other authors such as Mazzinghi and José Vilchez Lindez suggest that it is an eschatological judgement on the ruler and more broadly on every human being, in line with the eschatological nature of the first part of the book). The commentary does not contain as many philological references as the works by Mazzinghi or Giuseppe Scarpat, which not only explain the book in more detail, but also inspire further research and exploration. This fact is due to the profile of the work, which is intended to help understand the theological message of the Book of Wisdom and is a general commentary of a more theological nature. When reading the study, one may pause to reflect on the division of the biblical text. The study comments on large portions of the text (for example, Wis 13:1–15:19), which makes it difficult to consult the translation. In order to help the reader follow the text, the analysed passage of Scripture is included at the

beginning of the commentary on each verse. Perhaps a better choice would be to divide the translation into shorter pericopes and add a commentary immediately after them, to enable the reader not only to follow the text more easily, but also better understand the structure of the book and see the division into individual literary units, as is the case in Mazzinghi's or Ponizy's commentaries.