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A. KRAINER: Gottesbilder in Psalm 102. Netzwerke von Metaphern	1
C. NEUBER: „Es gibt keinen Gott“. Die Möglichkeit der Gottesleugnung und das Gottesbild in Psalm 9/10; 14; 53	26
A. SIQUANS: Gottes Wirksamkeit in menschlichem Handeln und Reden. Das Gottesbild in den Büchern Rut und Ester	47
A. VONACH: Making or Reading Books? The LXX-Version of Qoheleth and its Tendency to Pessimism	64

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MAKING OR READING BOOKS?

The LXX-Version of Qoheleth and its Tendency to Pessimism¹

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Abstract: The Book of Ecclesiastes is one of the most debated Books of the “Ketubim” according to its image of God on the one hand and its human inner mood on the other hand. This paper tries to show that the translation into Greek caused most of the negative stimulations and pessimistic views of the future often connoted with this scripture. The diaspora or minority experience may have led the translator(s) to such a critical outlook into nearer future. The Hebrew “Vorlage” was critical as well, but not so much to future as such, as more to the question about validity of traditional values. This paper shows how comparatively moderate linguistic adaptations were strong enough to lend a pessimistic overtone to a fascinating piece of literature, to theology and to the inner feeling of a great Hebrew sage, thinker and believer.

Abstract: Dem Kohelethbuch wird gern ein pessimistischer und weltkritischer Unterton nachgesagt. Dieser Beitrag möchte zeigen, dass aber vielmehr die Übersetzung ins Griechische viel von diesem Pessimismus erzeugt oder zumindest verstärkt. Ging es dem hebräischen Denker noch mehr um Gesellschafts- und Weisheitskritik, so dem Übersetzer deutlich mehr um einen generellen Zukunftspessimismus. Durch vergleichsweise moderate sprachliche Varianten und Eingriffe gelingt es ihm, einem faszinierenden Werk eines kritischen hebräischen Denkers einen deutlich pessimistischen Unterton zu verleihen.

Keywords: Septuagint; Qohelet; Pessimism; Translation technique.

The Book of Qoheleth is one of the most debated books of the ketubim due to its image of God on the one hand and to its human introspection on the other. Many scholars have stated – and continue to do so – that this text is characterized by a pessimistic world view.² A quick reading of the Hebrew text may at a first glance

¹ This paper is a slightly reworked and enlarged version of my paper at the EABS Conference in Warsaw presented on 14th August 2019.

² See for example Diethelm Michel, *Qohelet* (EdF 258), Darmstadt 1988, 88–89; Willem H. U. Anderson, *Qoheleth and Its Pessimistic Theology. Hermeneutical Struggles in Wisdom Literature*

lead to such an impression. But in fact, a closer text-critical examination of Qoheleth shows rather that the translation of the text into Greek emphasized the apparently pessimistic undertones of the work.

Of course, the Hebrew MT is also a rather pessimistic text, but not so much regarding the future as concerning the validity of traditional values. Even if the differences between the Hebrew and the Greek reflect moderate linguistic adaptations,³ they nevertheless seem to have been enough to cause a shift in the overall impression of the author's or redactor's worldview.

The Hebrew text, as the MT presents it, most likely came into existence around 230 to 210 BCE in Jerusalem wisdom circles.⁴ Its translation into Greek seems to have been a product of a rabbinic minority in the first half of the second century CE either in the Diaspora or possibly in Palestine itself.⁵ The translation is strongly influenced by its Hebrew source text which allows us to interpret the differences as theological actualizations on the part of the translator. Since the translator's Hebrew source does not seem to differ essentially from the MT, it is appropriate to use the MT as standard of comparison of the two versions.

The most important variations between the Hebrew and the Greek text can be collated under three topics.

1. The figurative meaning of הבל

The key word of the entire book is הבל, leading motto of Qoh 1:2 and framing the corpus of the scripture by a repetition of the 'motto-refrain' in 12:8. The figurative meaning of הבל – especially according to its usage in Qoheleth – points to experiences of the finiteness and limitation of human existence. Among the common Bible translations into modern languages Norbert Lohfink's rendering as *Windhauch* in the German *Einheitsübersetzung* seems to be the more or less only attempt to reflect the Hebrew meaning. In total the root הבל appears 38 times⁶ within the entire Book of Qoheleth. The LXX translates it as ματαιότης, which means vanity, meaninglessness, purposelessness or even absurdity.⁷ This

(Mellen Biblical Press Series 54), New York u. a. 1997, 58–61; Seizo Sekine, Qohelet als Nihilist, AJBI 17 (1991) 3–54; Aarre Lauha, Kohelet (BKAT 19), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, 20–21; among others.

³ Cf. Wolfgang Kraus/Martin Karrer (Hg.), Septuaginta Deutsch. Das griechische Alte Testament in deutscher Übersetzung, Stuttgart 2009, 978.

⁴ For more details, see Andreas Vonach, Nähere dich um zu hören. Gottesvorstellungen und Glaubensvermittlung im Koheletbuch (BBB 125), Berlin u. a. 1999, 10.

⁵ Cf. Kraus/Karrer, Septuaginta Deutsch (Anm. 3) 978.

⁶ Cf. Even-Shoshan, 279.

⁷ See Liddell-Scott, 1084.

of course causes a much more fatalistic and resigned view of human fate in general and humankind's potential for self-realization in particular than does the Hebrew expression. Unfortunately almost all modern translations of the Bible follow this Greek rendering, or even the Latin version, since the Vulgate – influenced by the LXX – also translates הַבַּל as 'vanitas'.⁸ In spite of this, because הַבַּל occurs quite regularly in Qoheleth – and mostly at crucial points of the text – even this moderate variant in translation leads to significant stress on the pessimistic worldview of the Greek version and strongly influences modern editions of the Bible and their interpreters, customers and recipients.

2. Human behavior and God's judgement

2.1 Concealed or overlooked deeds? – Qoh 12:14

The Greek translator has a more pessimistic view of human behavior and evil than the Hebrew author. This is generally expressed in the final statement at the very end of the book in Qoh 12:14. The Hebrew text there runs, "for God will bring every deed to judgement *over all that is concealed* (עַל כָּל־נִעְלָם) whether good or evil"; LXX translates it as "for God will bring every deed to judgement, *over*⁹ *all that has been overlooked* (ἐν παντὶ παρεωραμένῳ), whether good or evil". The rendering of παρεωραμένῳ (perfect passive participle neuter singular of παροράω) *that has been overlooked* for נִעְלָם (niph'al participle masculine singular of נָעַם) *that is concealed*, is also a divergent semantic alteration. First of all, it produces a changing of a general present statement about concealed matters into the description of the overall failure of human judgements from the past and in present times and in times to come. The MT expression presumes that most human behavior throughout history in fact *keeps concealed*, which means that many good and evil deeds of humankind will never come to light because hardly anybody takes notice of them. Only God as omniscient and omnipresent will be able to take these concealed matters into his consideration and therefore his judgement is to be seen as the only pure and just jurisdiction from which no-one is exempt. Contrary to this the LXX speaks of these matters not as accidental hidden facts, but as intentionally neglected deeds.

With this, the Greek translation produces a hermeneutical shift from something generally unrecognized to something which was deliberately kept free of

⁸ Cf. Robert Weber/Roger Gryson (ed.), *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart ⁵2015.

⁹ ἐν can easily be understood as literal translation of עַל, meaning "over"; there is no need to interpret it as "with", e.g. *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha*. With an English Translation and with Various Readings and Critical Notes, Grand Rapids 1972, 829.

consequence. The Hebrew text speaks of an all-embracing divine justice in judgement, whereas the Greek version portrays an act of divine judgement on human matters at the end of times which were not dealt with by earthly judgements. On the one hand the Hebrew expression must not be understood as eschatological,¹⁰ while the LXX presents itself as pure eschatology, and on the other hand the LXX even stresses human evil and the need for punishment much more than the MT does. And at the same time the Greek text criticizes – implicitly – the earthly institutions of justice and judgement.

2.2 One and the same fate for man and beast? – Qoh 3:16.18–19a

Such a tendency is already present in 3:16.18–19a; the MT reads in 3:16: “And furthermore I saw under the sun: a place for judgement – there is (the) *injustice* (הַרְשָׁעָה); and a place for justice – there is (the) *injustice*.” The LXX translates the Hebrew locative *a place for judgement* as a synthetic accusative and personalizes the Hebrew local and institutional terms: “And furthermore I saw under the sun a place for judgement. *There is the ungodly*¹¹ *one*. And a place of *the righteous one*. *There is the ungodly one*.” Whereas – thus the most evident explanation of these variations by the translator – the MT mainly criticizes the earthly institutions of judgement and social affairs, the LXX with the institution’s officials as representatives more directly blames humankind as a whole; even more, their behavior is seen as not only unjust but sinful. This, the LXX’s pessimistic image of humankind, is further stressed by the translation of v. 18.19a. The Hebrew text runs as follows: “I said in my heart *concerning* (עַל־דִּיבַרְתָּ)¹² human beings, that God *selects them* (בָּרַם)¹³ *and sees* that they are beasts, *they* to them. *Indeed*, the fate of human beings and the fate of beasts – *but* one fate is for both of them.” To the Hebrew sage – because of his belief in the biblical theology of creation – it goes without saying that there is a gradual distinction between humans and other living creatures. God *selects* them. But nevertheless God sometimes has to

¹⁰ See more detailed discussion in Roland Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (WBC 23A), Dallas u. a. 1992, 126.

¹¹ Greek ἀσεβής; for translation, see Johan Lust/Erik Eynikel/Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Revised Edition, Stuttgart 2003, 88.

¹² עַל־דִּיבַרְתָּ is a prepositional clause with final and/or causal understanding, from the root דִּבַּרְתָּ, and meaning “concerning/because of”. Cf. Gesenius¹⁷, 839; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (Anm. 10) 29–30; Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1998, 126.

¹³ בָּרַם is a causal infinitive of the root בָּרַר (with a third person masculine singular pronoun) meaning “to separate/to select”. See a detailed and critical discussion in Franz J. Backhaus, *Ekklesiastes/Kohelet/Der Prediger Salomo*, in: Martin Karrer/Wolfgang Kraus (Hg.), *Septuaginta Deutsch. Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament*, Band II. Psalmen bis Daniel, Stuttgart 2011, 2001–2028: 2011–2012; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (Anm. 10) 30; Vonach, *Nähere dich* (Anm. 4) 88.

take notice of the fact that humans may tend to act like beasts. Egocentrism, privileges of the stronger, jealousy concerning food, etc. seem to determine large parts of human societies. Humanity – thus the author’s observation – quite often tends to act not according to divine determination as bearer of God’s image. There is often no major difference to animal-like behavior. In v. 19a nevertheless the general differentiation of determination and fate between humans and animals is again stressed, but just to conclude that there is *one* fate which meets both humanity and animals in the same way, namely old age and death. The difference in determination should therefore be shown during one’s life time. The Greek translator adds ἐκεῖ (“there”) at the beginning of v. 18, through which he links the reflections of v. 18.19a directly with the place of judgement in v. 16, whereas the Hebrew text presents a general statement about the human condition and fate. דִּיבֶרֶת he interprets as deriving from דָּבַר and translates it as λαλιᾶς (“speech” – at the place of justice); he understands בָּרַר as God’s choosing humans as a judge replacing it with διακρινεῖ (“to judge”), whereas the MT speaks of a gradual distinction between humans and beasts made by God as a question of the order of creation. וּלְרֹאוֹת (qal causal infinitive from רָאָה – *and sees*) is read as hiphil (τοῦ δεῖξαι – *to show*) in the LXX, which causes a shift from a personal insight of God (MT) into a divine indictment against human judges and officials (LXX); “they” is replaced by “also”.¹⁴ In v. 19 the translator replaces “indeed” by “for” and emends “but”. So the LXX of Qoh 3:18.19a reads: “*There* I said in my heart *about the speech* of human beings, that God *will judge* them, and that *to show* that they are beasts, *also* to them. *For* the fate of human beings and the fate of beasts: one fate is for both.” The Hebrew text is quite optimistic regarding the exceptional status of humans among living creatures in principle. God has selected them, but nevertheless he has to recognize that in some ways they act like beasts. Their cultivation does not necessarily lead to more solidarity, consideration for one another, or mutual support. Yet, because of their special status in creation their fate is generally different from that of the beasts. Only one fate do they share with beasts, namely mortality. The Greek version, on the other hand, does not believe in such a distinction. Here the selection is seen as God’s (final) judgement through which he shows his people that in general the same fate will befall them as befalls the beasts. There is no difference between humans and beasts in their ultimate fate. This creates a much more pessimistic image of humankind in the LXX version of Qoheleth than in that of the MT.

¹⁴ For all the translation choices of the LXX in 3:18, cf. Backhaus, *Ekklesiastes* (Anm. 13) 2011–2012.

2.3 *Is there a nexus of deed and consequence? – Qoh 8:10.12a*

A similar case where in the LXX the evil of humanity is stressed much more than in the MT can be found in Qoh 8:10.12a. The MT speaks in v. 10 of an unfair situation of honor and dishonor by contrasting just and wicked with their sometimes unfair fate: “And then I saw unjust people *who got a funeral* (קברִים – qal passive participle masculine plural of קבר), *and they came* (ובאו – qal perfect third person plural of בא). *But those go* (יהלכו – piel imperfect third person masculine plural of הלך) from a holy place and are *forgotten* (ישתכחו – hithpael imperfect third person masculine plural of שכח) in the city, *who acted justly* (כִּן־אֵשׁוּ).” Qoheleth thus states that what the sages called the “nexus of deed and consequence” was obviously often seen to be ineffectual. With this, “we are presented with another example of the old dilemma of Israelite wisdom: the good and the wicked do not receive what they deserve”.¹⁵ There are unjust and ungodly persons who receive an honorable funeral to which many come and share their condolences. Even if the Hebrew text in v. 10a bears some uncertainties, there is no use in changing the MT of which no Hebrew variants exist.¹⁶ The funerals in view are to be understood as honorable events including large funeral processions in order to keep alive the memory and good name of the deceased.¹⁷ Having a burial as festive ceremony attended by a large number of participants is also seen as a matter of high value elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, whereas being unburied may hint at dishonor or even to a kind of divine punishment.¹⁸ Thus *ובאו and they came* according to MT is to be seen as the v. 10a concluding phrase,¹⁹ which points to numerous participants at funerals of the unjust who under fair circumstances would never have merited such an honor. The third person plural may thus be understood as an impersonal and general expression for such undefined visitors of these burials. V. 10b sets a contrast to 10a according to the similarly unfair fate of numerous righteous people. There are also the just and pious of whom hardly anyone takes notice even shortly after they leave the

¹⁵ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (Anm. 10) 84–85.

¹⁶ See for this decision Norbert Lohfink, *Kohelet* (NEB.AT), Würzburg 1986, 62; Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Nicht im Menschen gründet das Glück* (Koh 2,24). *Kohelet im Spannungsfeld jüdischer Weisheit und hellenistischer Philosophie* (HBS 2), Freiburg i. B. u. a. 1994, 186–187; Vonach, *Nähere dich* (Anm. 4) 96–97; among others.

¹⁷ Cf. Morton M. Berman, *Burial*, EJ 4 (1971) 1518.

¹⁸ See Manfred Görg, *Begräbnis*, NBL 1 (1991) 262–264: 264.

¹⁹ Thus Ludwig Levy, *Das Buch Qoheleth. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sadduzäismus*, Leipzig 1912, 117; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (Anm. 10) 84; Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Nicht im Menschen* (Anm. 16) 188; Vonach, *Nähere dich* (Anm. 4) 98; against most other interpreters, who create conjectures for the Hebrew text.

temple.²⁰ V. 10b does not necessarily speak about posthumous fame, but rather about the general public ignorance of God-fearing and just people. The allusion to the temple shows the author's conviction of the deep connection between religious belief and social action. The Hebrew sage concludes from his observation that, because God obviously does not punish ungodly actions immediately, many people will continue to do evil and unjust things. In v. 12a he summarizes: "For the sinner does evil a hundred times, and yet prolongs his life." The LXX-translator however does not have in view the nexus of deed and consequence as such, but only the evil and ungodly actions of the many. There is no mention of those who are pious and just in the Greek translation of v. 10; instead of the contrast between the wicked and the just, the LXX creates two parallel statements about the ungodly: "And then I saw the ungodly *carried into the tombs*, *also* from the holy place they departed (ἐπορεύθησαν), and *they were praised* in the city, *because they had acted thus*."

MT קברִים וּבָאוּ ("[they] got a funeral, and they came") is translated as εἰς τάφους εἰσαχθέντας ("[they were] carried into the tombs") in the LXX. The translator reads קברִים as plural of the noun קבר "tomb" and coordinates בוא as participle hofal (מובאים – "to be brought/carried") to it;²¹ for εἰς "into" the MT shows no equivalent. Generally speaking, the LXX version of v. 10a also points to honorable burials of wicked people which are seen as being far beyond what they fairly could have expected. The reading "also" for the v. 10b introducing וְ (MT "but") is a matter of different interpretation of the given context. A similar matter of hermeneutics opens the meaning of יהלכו (LXX ἐπορεύθησαν); whereas the MT speaks of pious people leaving the temple frequently after their visits for worship and praying, the LXX has a final and definite decision of ungodly people in view, who disappear from the temple forever, regarding both locality and loyalty. LXX renders MT ישתכחו ("[they] are forgotten") as ἐπηνέθησαν ("they were praised"); it may be that the translator read ישתבחו (hithpael imperfect third person masculine plural of שִׁבַּח – Aramaic for "to praise/laud")²² according to some Hebrew manuscripts. But the Aramaic hithpael would then in correct translation mean "and they praised themselves"; therefore – to conclude – it seems very likely that the LXX's rendering ἐπηνέθησαν is also the result of a moderate actualizing interpretation by the translator. Finally, כֵּן

²⁰ For the need to understand the expression "holy place" as term for the Jerusalem temple, see Oswald Loretz, *Qohelet und der alte Orient. Untersuchungen zu Stil und theologischer Thematik des Buches Qohelet*, Freiburg i. B. u. a. 1964, 77.

²¹ Cf. the text-critical apparatus' of BHS and Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*; furthermore Backhaus, *Ekklesiastes* (Anm. 14) 2021.

²² See Gesenius¹⁷, 801.

offers two horizons of meaning, namely “thus/so” (כֵּן I) and “right/veritable/honest” (כֵּן II);²³ whereas the MT refers to the latter,²⁴ the Greek translation οὕτως implies the former. Not only – thus the LXX’s message of v. 10 – do the wicked receive an honorable burial, they also dissociate themselves from the temple in blasphemy and hypocrisy and are even praised in the city for their despicable actions. The LXX’s conclusion of v. 12a along these lines has a very pessimistic undertone concerning the innate character of human evil: “He that has sinned has done evil from that time and since the beginning of his life.” This “translation” is hardly derived from the MT; the only common terms are “sinner”, “doing evil” and “life”, but the meaning of the Greek statement differs completely from the Hebrew. Whereas the MT seeks to find an explanation for the failure of the nexus of deed and consequence, the LXX states that if one has been born into an evil environment, someone will remain in evil his whole life; if someone sins once, he will keep sinning his whole life long. Humanity’s inherent evil is again much more stressed in the LXX than in the Hebrew text.

3. Of temple sacrifices and prayer offerings – Qoh 4:17

With the Greek translation of Qoh 4:17 – a text about appropriate action before God – we have an interesting example of theological actualization. The Hebrew consonant text reads: “Keep your foot, *when* (כֵּאֲשֶׁר) you go to the house of the God, *but draw near* (קָרַב – qal infinitive absolute) to listen. A gift of fools is a sacrifice (מַתָּה ²⁵הַכִּסִּילִים זָבָה), for they do not know that they are doing evil.” The author presents a remarkable threefold message: firstly he pleads for respect and awe of God when one visits the temple; secondly he admonishes visitors to the temple to go there for prayer and sees it as the most important part of prayer to listen to God and his message; and thirdly he criticizes sacrifices as foolish, but apologizes for those who offer as fools without a deeper knowledge. With the main message, “obedience is better than sacrifices”²⁶, Qoheleth is in line with other sages and prophets. But with this sharp condemnation of temple offerings

²³ Gesenius¹⁷, 351–352.

²⁴ This highly accepted thesis gets additional evidence by Schwienhorst-Schönberger’s observation that Qoheleth almost only speaks about the “ungodly/wicked/unjust” in contrast to the “just/wise” people: „Dort, wo Kohelet das Thema Frevler behandelt, tut er es in der Gegenüberstellung zum Gerechten/Weisen: 3,16–17; 7,15–18; 8,8b; 8,12b–14; 9,1–6. Von daher sollte man vermuten, daß in 8,10 auch vom Verhalten der ‚Nicht-Frevler‘ die Rede ist“ (Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Nicht im Menschen* [Anm. 16] 187).

²⁵ According to the Hebrew consonant text, but against the masorah, מַתָּה is to be understood as noun (*matat*) with the meaning “gift”.

²⁶ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (Anm. 10) 50.

in general and at the same time a clear preference for a spirituality based on listening he takes another major step. Through more grammatical variation in the third and a change of contents in the fourth clause, the translator actualizes the text for his audience around 100 years after the final destruction of the temple. The translation runs as follows: “Keep your foot, *whensoever* you go to the house of God, *and you are near* to hear. *Better than* the gift of fools is *your* sacrifice, for they do not know that they are doing evil.” By replacing the particle preposition כִּי by בְּ and reading באֲשֶׁר (ἐν ᾧ ἔσται – *whensoever*) according to some Hebrew manuscripts, the LXX states quite regular visits of the house of God. The “house of God” now no longer seems to mean the temple but the synagogue. For one entering the synagogue it was quite normal to go there to listen. To fit this understanding, the LXX interprets the infinitive absolute of קָרַב “to be near” as synthetic parallelism with “to go to the house ...”, whereas the MT suggests understanding it as continuing the preceding imperative.²⁷ The respectful and awestruck prayer of the pious Jew in the synagogue is already interpreted as the new and real “sacrifice” by the Greek translator. Such listening and prayer is seen as of higher sacrificial value than gifts brought by fools. To gain this meaning, the LXX creates a “better-than saying” by reading ὑπὲρ δόμα (*better than the gift* – מִמַּתָּה) for מַתָּה, and adding σου “your (sacrifice)” at the end of the clause. With this, the LXX of Qoh 4:17 offers a deep-rooted message for its contemporary readers: the synagogue service of that time had already successfully replaced former temple sacrifices. The new fools are those who still lament the loss of the temple cult and who are not willing to accept the synagogue service as an even better form of approaching God. Of course, in Qoh 4:17 the Greek version is not more pessimistic than the Hebrew, but it is a splendid example of the translators’ self-understanding as the theologians, teachers and sages of their time.

Conclusion

The most striking variant in the Greek text of Qoheleth is found in Qoh 12:12, the first part of the epilogue, where the wisdom teacher speaks words of warning to his disciple: “Furthermore, of these, my son, *be warned! There is no end in*

²⁷ For this reading of the MT, see Thomas Krüger, *Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung im Koheletbuch*, München 1990, 374; Hubert Tita, *Ist die thematische Einheit Koh 4,17–5,6 eine Anspielung auf die Salomoerzählung? Aporien der religionskritischen Interpretation*, BN 84 (1996) 87–102: 91; Vonach, *Nähere dich* (Anm. 4) 41.

the making of many books,²⁸ and too much study is weariness to the body.” Thus far the Hebrew text. The sage warns his charge that there will be an almost endless production of new books, which will make studying a troublesome and wearisome business. Through a series of syntactical changes the LXX reads: “My son, *beware of making many books! There is no end!*”²⁹ And too much study is weariness to the body.” With these changes the teacher warns his disciple of writing books himself. Not only reading and studying causes weariness for the body, but primarily active writing. In this striking translation the sage, theologian and translator warns about the risks of his own passion and profession.

It seems very likely that this last statement about the sage writing many books may also be seen as part of the translator’s program of looking critically and pessimistically at what the future holds. Is it the diaspora experience or even Roman oppression in Judea that lead him to such depressing tendencies? This is not easy to decide. But in any case he presents himself as a translator of a fascinating book, a translator who was ready to understand the business of translating as a work of interpretation, actualization and inculturation. His prognosis for the near future gives the Greek version of the book of Qoheleth a somewhat pessimistic undertone which was by no means present to the same degree in his Hebrew source text.

²⁸ עֲשׂוֹת סְפָרִים הַרְבֵּה אֵין קֵץ. The syntactic and semantic understanding of the MT is absolutely clear and free of any doubts. No Hebrew text-critical variants do exist and the meaning of the verse is logical and fitting the overall context.

²⁹ φύλαξαι ποιῆσαι βιβλία πολλά; οὐκ ἔστιν περασμός ... LXX reads φύλαξαι “beware” as the beginning of the second clause and starts with οὐκ ἔστιν a new sentence.