


Luca Mazzinghi, *Libro della Sapienza. Introduzione – traduzione – commento* (Analecta Biblica. Studia 13; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2020). Pp. 848. € 115. ISBN978–8876537226

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The number of studies dealing with exegesis and theology of the Book of Wisdom is constantly growing, although it still seems that not enough attention is being paid to that work. In the early days of the Church, the Book of Wisdom enjoyed great interest and was often quoted by the Fathers of the Church. Due to its numerous references to philosophy, its elaborate language and theological innovations, commenting on it is a real exegetical challenge.

The commentary written by Luca Mazzinghi is a highly recommended work. It can be considered the culmination of the research works of the author, who, after preparing a commentary published in German (*Weisheit* [IECOT; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2018]) and English (*Wisdom* [IECOT; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2019]) also published a commentary in Italian, which is an expanded and thoroughly thought out version.

Luca Mazzinghi is a respected Italian exegete, a specialist in wisdom literature. He studied at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and at the *École biblique et archéologique française* in Jerusalem. The topic of his doctoral dissertation was the analysis of Wis 17:1–18:4 and the work was published in the Analecta Biblica series. His doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Maurice Gilbert, along with studies by biblical scholars such as Michael Kolarcik, Pierre Dumoulin and Michelangelo Priotto, is an important contribution to the studies of the Book of Wisdom. Moreover, Mazzinghi is the author of many scientific papers devoted primarily to wisdom literature. The books published by him are often the result of the lectures conducted at the Theological Faculty of Central Italy at Florence, at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and at the Pontifical Gregorian University, where he is currently a lecturer.

The most recent commentary by Mazzinghi is more extensive than the German or English versions and it is the culmination of the studies of the Italian exegete on the Book of Wisdom. The commentary consists of an extensive general introduction (pp. 7–54), in which the most important issues concerning authorship, context, literary genre, dates and the literary structure of the Book are addressed. Then, the author discusses the individual parts of the Book (Wis 1:1–6:25, pp. 55–280; Wis 7–9, pp. 281–408; Wis 10–19, pp. 409–758). The commentary includes a bibliography divided into sections (comments:

pp. 759–760; general studies: pp. 760–785; other studies: pp. 786–789). At the end of the commentary, there is a useful index of Greek terms (pp. 791–800), an index of biblical quotations (pp. 801–814) and an index of texts from ancient literature referred to in the commentary (pp. 815–828).

The general introduction deals with issues related to the context, structure and general introduction to the subject of the Book. The unique character of the Book is presented and the fact that it constitutes an important link between the Old Testament and the New Testament is emphasised. The author dedicates a short paragraph to the Greek text and the translations of the Book, and then, he analyses its structure, which is still the subject of a debate. A lot of attention is paid to the style of the Book. Mazzinghi emphasises the presence of numerous *hapax legomena* in the text, as well as the elegance and precision of the language, which includes many elements characteristic of the ancient rhetoric practised in Alexandria. A separate paragraph is devoted to the literary genres that the inspired author used in his work. In addition to Greek genres (*encomiums*, *logos protrepticos*), the use of the Midrash style, which is skilfully combined with typically Greek genres, is analysed. In the next paragraph, Mazzinghi shows the relation between the Book of Wisdom and other biblical texts, pointing out those that may have been a source of inspiration for the author. The relation between the Book of Wisdom and the writings of Judaism, both the ones in Hebrew and those in Greek (*Letter of Aristeas*, *the Third and Fourth Books of the Maccabees* and the Writings of Philo of Alexandria) is also presented. The topics of the relation between the work of Pseudo-Solomon and the broadly-understood Hellenism, the polemics against idolatry and the reference to popular philosophical trends are also raised. Next, the author of the commentary shows the links between the Book of Wisdom and the New Testament, especially the writings of Paul. The issue of the canonicity of the Book and its reception in the days of early Church is discussed.

After the introduction, the author proceeds to comment on different parts of the Book. Presenting the first part of the Book (Wis 1:1–6:25), he briefly discusses its literary structure and genre. Then, he analyses individual pericopes, following the literary structure he had adopted. Sections devoted to the praise of wisdom, the philosophy of godless, the attitude of the righteous and the godless, as well as the topic of eschatological judgment are analysed. Finally, Wis 6 is discussed, in which the inspired author reiterates the call to embrace wisdom as a guide to life, included in Wis 1. A passage from Wis 6:22–25 is also discussed, which is structurally related to the first part of the Book and, at the same time, constitutes the introduction to the second part of it.

In the second part of the commentary, which is an *encomium* of Wisdom, chapters 7–9 are discussed. Mazzinghi shows the precise structure of that part of the Book, based on the results of the research conducted by Paolo Bizzeti, and analyses individual sections of the work that concern the person of Solomon and his origin, the discovery of Wisdom as the most precious gift and the relationship between Solomon and Wisdom described with the use of the conjugal metaphor. The ninth chapter – the heart of the Book – contains a prayer for Wisdom and closes the second part of the Book.

The last part of the Book (chapters 10–19) refers to the history of Israel and presents the events of salvation history, updated and interpreted in the Midrash style. First, the Italian exegete analyses chapter 10, devoted to the eight figures of salvation history contained in the Book of Genesis and then, he presents seven diptychs comparing the Israelites and Egyptians, mentioned in the third part of the Book. In the analysis, he emphasises the so-called “digressions,” which are a reflection on God’s mercy (Wis 11:15–12:27), and chapters 13–15 that contain a critique of idolatry.

The commentary by Mazzinghi is an important milestone in the study of the Book of Wisdom. It is a valuable supplement to the monumental works by Carl Larcher and Giuseppe Scarpato, which are still points of reference in historical-critical and literary studies. Based on those works and other studies, Mazzinghi creates a valuable theological synthesis that reveals the state of research on the Book and its current theological interpretation. Based on his experience and scientific workshop, he makes some significant theological findings. The above can be noticed, for example, in his analysis of Wis 2:23 (p. 131), where he refers to and confirms James M. Reese’s thesis on the meaning of the preposition *epi*. His interpretation significantly influences the way of translating and understanding that passage and seems to be the best interpretation of that extract at the moment. While making important findings, Mazzinghi does so in a logical and convincing manner. While referring to other commentaries, he does not overwhelm the reader with an excess of information but advises the sources and, at the same time, presents his own theological synthesis in a clear and logical way.

The commentary is very clearly structured. The author resigns from the division of the work into synchronic and diachronic analysis, which was noticeable in the German and English versions (however, the content remains practically the same). At the beginning of each pericope, he refers to important articles and studies that concern individual verses and sections of the Book. Then, he makes a precise translation of each pericope. He gives a lot of attention to the structure of the Book as well as to textual and philological issues. Finally, he presents his exegetical and theological commentary in a synthetic way, trying to show the theological message and the essential relations of the Book with the world of Judaism and Hellenism. His theological syntheses at the end of the larger sections of his work are also valuable as they clearly show the message of the author without overburdening the reader with excessive detail of a purely erudite nature.

The commentary, which was first written in Italian (the Italian version was published as the last one, after the German and English version were published by Kohlhammer), is a valuable synthesis of knowledge about the Book of Wisdom extended by important additions, which were not included in the previous versions (it can be noticed, for example, in Wis 2:21–24, in the case of which there is a more extensive commentary on the devil’s envy and references to extra-biblical literature in the Italian version). The advantage of the work by Mazzinghi is that the author does not repeat the issues known from other studies but provides important interpretation and guidelines for understanding particular expressions. What is unique about that commentary is also the fact that, in addition to biblical

references and the presentation of the influence of Judaic thought, the author constantly emphasises the importance of Hellenistic culture (Platonism, Stoicism and others), which undoubtedly had a great influence on the way of thinking of the inspired author.

In the commentary, one can notice the typical style of the Italian exegete, known from his many books and characterised by the fact that precision and accuracy of argumentation are combined with a clear message. The commentary is the result of many years of in-depth research of the author and his ability to create an up-to-date and convincing synthesis of knowledge about the Book of Wisdom based on the available literature on the subject. The work can be included, without a doubt, in the group of commentaries that will always be the point of reference in the studies on the Book of Wisdom.