MESSIANISM IN EZEKIEL IN HEBREW AND IN GREEK, EZEK 21:15(10) AND 20(15)

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MESSIANISM IN SEPTUAGINTAL MATERIALS

It is often said that the Septuagint shows signs of a developing messianism, especially in as far as royal messianism is concerned.¹ J. Coppens, one of the protagonists of this view defines messianism as follows. It is the expectation of an individual human and yet transcendent saviour. He is to come in a final eschatological period and will establish God’s Kingdom on earth. Royal messianism is the expectation of a royal Davidic saviour at the end time.² According to the Christian tradition, some of the main texts witnessing to this royal messianism are to be found in Isaiah: the “Immanuel” oracle in 7:14, the “Unto us a child is born” oracle in 9:1–5. In Coppens’ view, a comparison between the Masoretic and Septuagint texts of these and similar passages³ shows a clear evolution towards a more personal, more supernatural, and more transcendent messianism.

This view should be revised. One cannot treat the Septuagint as a unified entity, and draw general conclusions based on the study of one text or one book. Moreover, one should avoid arbitrary selections of proof texts. The numerous passages in the Greek texts where a “messianizing” translation might have been expected, but where it is not found, should not be overlooked. Each relevant text should

² Coppens, Messianisme, 14–15.
³ Coppens also refers to Ps 110(109):3; others add Gen 3:15; 49:10; Num 24:7,17; 2 Sam 7:16; Is 11:4; 14:19–32; Ezek 17:23; 21:30–32; 43:3; Dan 7:13; Hos 8:10; Amos 4:13; Zech 9:10; for bibliographical references, see Lust, “Messianism. Ez 21,” 174 note 2.
be studied on its own, and in its context. At the present stage of the research, one cannot conclude that the Septuagint as a whole displays a messianic exegesis.  

Focussing upon the Psalms, J. Schaper, however, recently revived the thesis that the Septuagint reflects an increased degree of messianism, influenced by the “intellectual, religious and political climate” of its environment. He is convinced that current Septuagint scholarship needs a corrective. It’s approach is too one-sided in its preoccupation with detailed analyses of the translation technique used by particular translators in the respective books or in parts of them. It needs to be replaced by a broader understanding of the Greek text as a literary document in its own right and expressive of its own cultural and historical milieu. Only with an open eye for this larger background can one detect the interpretative character of the translation and the main facts of its theological “Tendenz.”

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