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Review: T. Tułodziecki, *Tożsamość nowego Izraela w Księdze Zachariasza* (New Israel's Identity in the Book of Zechariah), serie: *Scripta Theologica Thoruniensia* 33, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2014, pp. 342

The Second Vatican Council, whose proceedings came to a close over half a century ago, insisted that the frequent reading of Sacred Scripture “is essential to promote that warm and living love for scripture” (SC 24) so that none of those who “are legitimately active in the ministry of the word (...) will become an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly” (DV 25), and “so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God;s word” (SC 51).

Fr. Tułodziecki's book is a search for and an analysis of the motives that constitute the identity of the chosen nation against the background of the *Book of Zechariah*. The subject of the work was formulated as follows: *Tożsamość nowego Izraela w Księdze Zachariasza* (The Identity of New Israel in the Book of Zechariah). The topic has been little discussed by Polish scholars, nor are there many relevant publications in the entire world bibliography, so there is no doubt that it deserves to be the subject of a habilitation thesis.

Apart from the list of abbreviations, bibliography, introduction and conclusion, the work is made up of the following parts: *Problem tożsamości Izraela w okresie przedwygnaniowym i w czasie niewoli babilońskiej*, *Problemy literackie za 1-8* oraz *Podstawy tożsamości nowego Izraela w cyklu nocnych wizji Proto-Zachariasza (1,7-6,14)* (The Problem of the Identity of Israel in Pre-Exile and Babylonian Period, Literary Problems in Zech 1-8 and The Fundamentals of the Identity of New Israel in the Proto-Zechariah Night Visions Cycle [1:7-6,14]).

The proposed structure of the work seems logical and does not raise objections. The structure of individual chapters is extremely clear.

In the introduction, the Author specifies the purpose of the publication in the following words:

The basic issue, to which we will try to find an answer in this work, is to find in individual [Zechariah's – MR] visions the elements that constitute the identity of Israel. This is primarily the Law of the Torah, which in fact represents Yahweh itself. Some of the visions refer directly to this great gift that was the fruit of Yahweh's Holy Alliance with Israel (e.g., the vision of a flying scroll; Zech 5:1-4), in other images the relationship to the Torah is hidden under the cover of symbols and mysterious expressions, the discovery of which will be the main purpose of these analyses.

Such a precise goal seems clear and its formulation does not raise any objections.

In the introduction, the Author specifies the method of the thesis in the following words:

The combination of historical and theological reading of the biblical text requires the use of the historical-critical method, which combines two levels of analysis: diachronic and synchronic. Although different procedures of the historical-critical method will be used to properly show the message of the individual texts that make up the night cycle of Zechariah's vision, the whole study will rather be based on a different kind of theological study, which – in brief – can be described as conceptual.

The instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on the interpretation of Scripture highly appreciates the combination of synchronic and diachronic methods. The historical-critical method commonly adopted by biblical scholars until recently today seems to be insufficient in many cases. The Papal Biblical Commission states:

To be sure, the classic use of the historical-critical method reveals its limitations. It restricts itself to a search for the meaning of the biblical text within the historical circumstances that gave rise to it and is not concerned with other possibilities of meaning which have been revealed at later stages of the biblical revelation and history of the church. Nonetheless, this method has contributed to the production of works of exegesis and of biblical theology which are of great value (*Interpretacja Pisma Świętego w Kościele A* [The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church A]).

Therefore, it is important that in Fr. Tułodziecki's work the historical-critical method in the diachronic aspect has been complemented by the synchronic aspect because it is only thanks to this approach that the theological message of particular texts of the Book of Zechariah can be properly extracted.

In the first chapter of his work, the Author presents the problem of Israel's national identity in the pre-exile period and during the Babylonian captivity. In his research he reaches back to the time of the patriarchs and the period of Exodus and settlement of the Israelites in Canaan, he writes about the crisis of Israel's identity in the monarchical era, and about the struggle for that identity waged by the pre-exile and exile prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah). The whole reflection of the first chapter ends with a short summary.

The second chapter deals with literary issues in Zech 1-8: the historical context of Zechariah's speech, the validity of the division of the book into Proto- and Deutero-Zechariah, the formal and substantive relations between the Book of Haggai and Proto-Zechariah and the role of night visions in Zech 1-8. This part of the work also ends with a short summary.

In the third chapter the Author discusses extensively these night visions, which were described in Zech 1:7-6,14. These include analyses of visions one (1:7-17) and seven (6:1-8) understood as "preparing God's space;" analyses of visions two (2:1-4) and six (5:5-11) as "purifying God's space;" visions three (2:5-9) and five (5:1-4) as "strengthening God's space;" and a discussion of vision four (4:1-14) understood as showing God who is "the living space of the New Israel." It is the category of space that has become the dominant category in the analyses carried out by the Author and it seems to be a kind of novelty of the work.

The last part of the work – the summary chapter – is its conclusion. Generally speaking, the results of the conducted analyses can be summed up by the Author's own words:

The novelty of the Book of Zechariah in showing the identity for the New Israel is to underline even more strongly the message that its adoption is not limited only to Jews, but that, according to the words of 8:20-23, it should become a program of life in a universal perspective (p. 321).

It should be noted that the analyses performed in particular chapters are extremely reliable because they do not overlook the historical, religious and literary context of the individual texts. The analyses have strongly benefited from the linguistic competence of the Author, who studies the etymology and semantics of the most important terms appearing in Zechariah's visions.

Fr. Tułodziecki uses correct and rich vocabulary, the language of the dissertation is scientific, although not inaccessible. The specific ease of using the written word results, as one can suppose, from the fact that the Author is very well-read in the literature on the subject matter. The conclusions of the dissertation are formulated in an understandable and competent manner; they are well argued and justified in the contents of the text. They are characterized by the logic of the argument. They result directly from the conducted research and are not – as it sometimes happens – too far-reaching or unsubstantiated in the conducted research.

The collected literature is very abundant. The Author has reached many publications that are not easily available in many foreign languages, which is commendable. Of course, it is possible to supplement the bibliography with a few more items, but today the biblical literature is so rich that it is impossible (and sometimes simply not necessary) to include all the publications in a given field.

The work contains a lot of footnotes, sometimes very extensive, which indicate skilful use of the literature. However, on very few pages, where there are no footnotes, the Author shows his excellent independent thinking and the ability to make a logically correct argument. This lack of footnotes in some parts is therefore not a shortcoming, but – on the contrary – it proves that the work is creative. All the footnotes are edited correctly. The list of abbreviations is also extensive.

It should be emphasized that the Author not only moves perfectly well along the meanders of the Hebrew language (which is absolutely necessary in this type of work), but also reaches for English, German and Italian literature, which significantly increases the value of the analyses made. It is a pity that a short summary in a foreign language has not been attached to the whole book. This would make the results of the research of the Polish biblical scholar accessible to foreign readers.