

Jolanta Szarlej, *Językowy obraz człowieka w profetycznych księgach Starego Testamentu*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Techniczno-Humanistycznej w Bielsku-Białej, Bielsko-Biała 2013, 255 pp. (Rozprawy Naukowe, 46)

Tomasz Maria Dąbek OSB

Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow
tomasz.dabek@upjp2.edu.pl

The habilitation thesis of Jolanta Szarlej, a linguist at the University of Bielsko-Biała, is an interdisciplinary work in the fields of linguistics and Biblical studies. She deals with terminology related to man: his nature, his relationship with God the Creator, and with other creatures in the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament.

In a lengthy preface (beginning on page 11), she notes the distinct way of verbalizing thoughts in the Biblical tradition and in Indo-European languages, including differences on the phonic (graphic), morphological, lexical, and syntactic levels, as well as in the field of linguistic pragmatics.

Next, she discusses the prophecies of the Israelites (beginning on page 37) as a religious phenomenon. She also notes the woman prophets.

The next chapter is devoted to her methodology (starting on page 71). Szarlej approaches her research on Biblical texts from a linguistic perspective. Making use of the contemporary achievements of her discipline, she discusses the concept of the linguistic image of the world that in the texts of the prophets corresponds to the state of knowledge at the time when the inspired books were written. She writes about the entanglement of man as a thinking being in the triad of language, thought, and action; the influence of the mental models of the world on the image of the real world; the functions interpreting and regulating the linguistic image of the world; and the tensions between factuality and virtuality. Szarlej presents the history of research on the linguistic image of the world, its components and determinants, as well as the material basis for her research: the prophetic texts presented chronologically.

The longest chapter is titled *Językowy obraz człowieka* (“The Linguistic Image of Man,” beginning on page 99). It begins with a discussion of Biblical anthropology. Next, Szarlej studies lexemes referring to man in the Polish language and

in the Hebrew Bible (Adam and Eve אָדָם וְחַוָּה; lexemes expressing the biological aspect of humanity: אִישׁ אִשָּׁה); and those describing the person as an individual being: אִישׁ אִשָּׁה). Materials with the lexemes אִישׁ אִשָּׁה, the use of the lexeme אִישׁ as a pronoun, and syntactic constructions containing the lexeme אִישׁ are studied in depth. The last part discusses the term אִישׁוֹן, which comes from the Hebrew אֵי, meaning the pupil of the eye, which indirectly shows the meaning of man.

In the penultimate chapter of the dissertation, Szarlej discusses man among other beings (starting on page 177), as a relational being: people of different ages (the elderly, youths, virgins, and children and their place in the society of Biblical Israel). Very important is the dialogical nature of creation: the infinite God wants to enter into dialogue with His creation, “patiently searching for the path to the heart of man who has been granted such great freedom that he is always capable of opposing God” (page 191).

The last chapter presents Biblical and European models of beauty in literature (starting on page 209). In order to evaluate the beauty of Hebrew texts, one must know the rules of Semitic rhetoric. In her analysis, the author adopts the assumptions and methodology of the French scholar Roland Meynet. She notes binarity at the first (that of language or grammar), second (words or discourse), or third (the entirety of the book) level. Binarity “does not assume a simple repetition, but instead it assumes the harmonizing of the redoubled form and redoubled contents; in them is hidden the deep meaning that should be uncovered and updated” (page 210). She gives examples of texts at the first two levels and ends by noting the unity of the Bible appearing in its subject matter, symbols, and imagery.

At the end, she summaries the results of her research on the terminology that presents man as “the crown of creation” whose sexual dimorphism and the difficulty of building unity as a means of growth are important traits.

The text is supplemented by a rich bibliography, list of abbreviations, and summaries in Polish and in English.

The dissertation is evidence that the author is an outstanding scholar. She reminds Christians of the value of their inspired books, which have been subject to detailed linguistic research for the good of general human culture. During the present-day conversation about the need to appreciate women, noting women and their role in the Bible as well as in the society of ancient Israel is valued. This dissertation should be of interest to linguists, Biblical scholars, theologians, and catechists, as well as all those who want to gain a greater familiarity with the contents and form of Biblical revelation as well as the fundamentals of our culture.