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We All Need PEACE

[o. Tomasz Maria Dąbek, „Szukaj pokoju i dąż do niego” (Ps 34, 15). *Biblia o pokoju*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie, Kraków 2017, pp. 186.]

The book “*Szukaj pokoju i dąż do niego*” (Ps 34, 15). *Biblia o pokoju* “*Look for Peace and Strive for It.*” (Ps 34:15). *The Bible on Peace* is a natural fruit of many years of scientific interests of Rev. Tomasz Maria Dąbek OSB, the Author of six previous volumes from the series titled *Biblijne Wezwania do Rozwijania Kultury* (*Biblical Calls for the Development of Culture*). After having analysed such biblical terms as SILENCE, TOLERANCE, WORK, WOMAN’S DIGNITY, JUSTICE – HONESTY – DECENCY, EMULATION OF GOD AND CHRIST, in his next work the Author refers to biblical texts discussing PEACE. From the very beginning it should be emphasized that the Author raises an important subject for contemporary people and dramatically pertinent in the world shaken by wars, conflicts, and affected by hatred.

What opens the book is a bibliography whose richness explains the erudition of the Author, who moves with ease among the vast array of biblical studies published in Poland, Europe, and elsewhere in the world, not only general comments on the Old and New Testaments, but also numerous detailed works devoted to the concept of PEACE and related problems. Copious footnotes referring the reader’s attention to the detailed discussion of the issues raised constitute a demonstration of the Author’s research

competence and make the book reviewed herein a priceless guide for both beginners and proficient *Bible* scholars alike.

The main content of the book is presented in two parts: the first one is devoted to the reflection on the concept of PEACE in the Old Testament, while in the second one the Author considers the concept basing on the texts from the New Testament. This clear arrangement repeats the solution adopted in the previous volumes of the series. The internal division is “dictated” by biblical texts exposing successive aspects of the phenomenon under study.

With the selection of texts in the first chapter, the Author documents the truth about the Lord who “is Peace” (Judges 6:24), who is peace giver and the guarantor of peace in the world created by Himself – perceivable both in the harmony of nature and in the harmony between people and nations.

The second chapter presents the concept of peace as a consequence of God’s blessing. This gift guarantees the chosen people safety against the attack of wild animals and enemies. God becomes the guarantor of safety for the people who are in covenant of faith with Him. What provides the foundation for PEACE is the bond of love between the Creator and His faithful people. The collected texts illustrate the meaning of the Old Testament’s frequent valediction “Go in peace,” which is synonymous with wishing one propitiousness anchored in God’s blessing.

The third chapter specifies the conditions and actions that lead to preserving peace. A substantial collection of texts points to sacrifices and prayers, but also to a prudent behaviour based on respect for others. The Author shows examples of positive behaviour of Biblical heroes, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or David, whose actions were marked by concern for peace. Following numerous texts, the Author presents periods of peace in the history of Israel. The analysis of the texts clearly shows that lack of peace is a punishment for bad deeds and unfaithfulness to the covenant.

In the chapter titled “The Call to Live in Peace,” two roots relating to the sphere of inner human experience, i.e. שִׁת – šît and דַּמָּם – dmm, have been thoroughly analysed and discussed. Both denote the attitude of inner peace, achieving the state of spiritual tranquillity of a person, which is the fruit of full trust in God, of entrusting oneself and one’s own affairs to His wisdom and mercy. Hebrew roots are often characterized by the double-layered meaning, referring simultaneously to the spheres of the concrete and abstract, the biological and spiritual, the active and passive, etc., which has been perfectly emphasized in the analysis provided here. The biblical

argumentation (Ps. 34:15; Ps. 122; Tob. 12:17, Dan. 10:19) clearly shows that “seeking peace” denotes “doing good,” and the concept of peace itself appears in the context of values such as GOOD, TRUTH, COURAGE, LACK OF THREAT, JUSTICE, HUMBLENESS, PROPITIUSNESS that characterize the axiological system in the *Old Testament*.

The chapter “Threats to Peace” introduces an incredibly important reminder to the readers, and perhaps even an admonition, namely that sin is the source of all disorder in their inner and social life. Such an approach to the question of threats to peace deepens our understanding of biblical ideas.

The following chapter points to the danger of ostensible peace that has no firm foundation in conversion and faithfulness to the covenant. It is a negative phenomenon because it gives rise to false optimism, which can easily lead to a disaster.

The last chapter of the first part characterizes the *Old Testament* image of the Messiah as “Prince of Peace,” who will call for reconciliation, conciliate the feuding, and become a model of humbleness and justice. This shape of the seventh chapter allows for a smooth transition from the Old to the New Testament: from the prophecy to its embodiment in the person of Jesus Christ.

In accordance with the message conveyed in the Scripture, the Son of God and His teachings feature prominently in the second part of the book. The Author aptly begins the part with a chapter discussing the title of God of peace, already known from the *Old Testament*, but this time referring also to the Second Divine Person. The gift of peace becomes one of the greatest Christian virtues, mentioned by St. Paul in his *Letter to the Galatians* (5:22n), which are the foundation of individual and community life. In the Author’s interpretation of the examined texts, peace turns out to be synonymous with a collection of graces that lead to conversion and salvation.

What should be regarded as extremely valuable here is the second chapter devoted to the analysis of Christ’s teaching on peace. With his selection of texts, the Author has perfectly emphasized and documented the difference between the common and universal notion of peace, which can be understood as a “balance of egoisms,” and the PEACE of Christ, understood as a gift of God, but also a task for His followers. The reminder of Christ’s specific recommendations for the active promotion of peace in interpersonal relationships is of great value in today’s world permeated with conflicts. Also the revolutionary change in the approach to the law of

vengeance brought about by the imperative to love one's enemies has been rightly highlighted by the Author. What is of great value here is a linguistically simple yet profoundly spiritual interpretation of Christ's difficult and often controversial words, such as those about enduring adversity and resisting the temptation to retaliate (Mt 5:38-42). This interpretation can certainly be of help to many contemporary readers of *The Bible* since it is convincingly legitimized by the Author's depiction of a broad cultural background to the words of Christ.

The third chapter of the second part brings an in-depth semantic interpretation of the Greek (rooted in the Hebrew tradition, after all) courteous expressions containing the idea of PEACE. The Author reveals and meticulously documents a new aspect that the meaning of the term in question has acquired – not only does it denote the state of emotional tranquillity, but it also becomes a “sign of the Messianic era” and the fruit of God's reconciliation with people through the sacrifice of Christ.

In the Apostles' teachings (discussed in the chapter titled “The Apostolic Texts on Peace and the Call to Build Peace”), the Author has emphasized very practical, detailed advice on how to build relationships in the family and one's own environment, so that they give rise to unity and peace. It is easy to discern that the indications of the Apostles have lost none of their relevance in our modern times.

The last, fifth chapter of the second part emphasizes the unique significance of PEACE, showing it as a value to be asked of God, and emphasizing the greatness of the reward that the future peacemakers on earth will receive in their lives.

The value of the book should be seen in its clear layout, accurate selection of the material, clear language of argument, synthetic approach to the problem under study preserving, however, a full scientific apparatus that allows to reach detailed interpretations of each pericope. These features make the work “*Szukaj pokoju i dąż do niego*” (Ps 34, 15). *Biblia o pokoju* (“*Look for Peace and Strive for It.*” (Ps 34:15). *The Bible on Peace*) helpful to both beginner readers of the Book of Books, who are looking for a systematic explanation of certain terms, and seasoned scientists, to whom it shall serve as a reliable guide to the abysses of world biblical literature which comments on individual texts in detail. What matters is the topicality of the issues raised, as well as the originality and reliability that characterizes the interpretations of biblical pericopes. I consider the references to Hebrew and Greek terms conceptualizing various aspects of the Biblical concept of PEACE, from the individual's inner life and relationship with God to social behaviour, to

be particularly valuable. The analyses presented in the book may serve as a basis for further scientific research in such fields as linguistics, semantics, cultural or educational studies. Rev. Prof. Tomasz Maria Dąbek's book "*Szukaj pokoju i dąż do niego*" (Ps 34, 15). *Biblia o pokoju* deals with a subject that is extremely important for modern people, not only scientists, which is why the dissemination of this publication is of utmost importance.

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The authoress of the review begins her text with the statement that the book "*Szukaj pokoju i dąż do niego*" (Ps 34, 15). *Biblia o pokoju* ["*Look for peace and strive for it*" (Ps 34:15). *The Bible on Peace*] by Rev. Prof. Tomasz Maria Dąbek OSB touches upon a subject which is crucial for contemporary people and dramatically pertinent in the world shaken by wars, conflicts, and affected by hatred. What the reviewer considers particularly valuable in the analysis carried out by the Tyniec Benedictine are references to Hebrew and Greek terms conceptualizing various aspects of the biblical notion of PEACE, starting with the individual's inner life and their relations with God and finishing the social behaviour. She recommends the analyses presented in the book to both experienced Bible researchers and beginner readers, for whom they can become a valuable guide to biblical truths. In the reviewer's opinion, the book may become the basis for further scientific research in such fields of research as linguistics, semantics, cultural studies or pedagogy.

Keywords: *The Bible*, peace, inner peace, God - Lord of Peace, Messiah – "Prince of Peace," "the balance of egoisms" versus the PEACE of Christ

Słowa kluczowe: Biblia, pokój, pokój wewnętrzny, Bóg – Pan pokoju, Mesjasz – „Książę pokoju”, „zbalansowany egoizm” versus POKÓJ Chrystusowy

