

Preface: In memoriam Géza G. Xeravits (1971–2019)

It is always a trauma to lose a family member or a close friend, but if it is by way of a dramatic disease, it is a tragedy. Géza was only 48 years old; he leaves behind four kids (Ábris 20; Sára 18; Döme 15; Rézi 11) and a wife (Kriszta). To be consoled we need to remember. Remember the good days, the time we spent together, the good deeds he did, and for a scholarly community, especially his scholarly legacy. In this volume 25 colleagues and friends have gathered to express our honor, love, and thanks for the life of Géza Xeravits who would be 50 in this year. We remember him as a colleague, scholar, and friend.

As a colleague: Géza Xeravits's career began after his graduation from the Pázmány Péter Catholic University Budapest (1996); he was a lecturer at the Saint Athanas College of the Greek Catholic Church in Nyíregyháza, where he worked for two years. After three years of scholarships in Leuven and Groningen (1999–2002), he started to work at the Reformed Theological College at Pápa as an assistant professor. During his seven years of teaching he defended his PhD thesis in Groningen (2002) and made a habilitation (2008). He was a beloved and popular teacher among the students, and he had an ability to identify those with talent. He became professor in Pápa in 2008. From 2009 he was professor and chair of Biblical Studies at the Sapientia College of Theology of Religious Orders in Budapest. Between 2015 and 2018 he taught at the Theological Faculty of the János Selye University of Komarno (Slovakia). In his last year (2019), he was employed as research professor at the Theological Faculty of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University Budapest.

As a scholar: Géza Xeravits published his first book in 1995 on the continuous pesharim from Qumran while still in his graduate studies. He founded a Hungarian journal for Biblical Studies in Nyíregyháza (*Studia Biblica Athanasiana*), which he edited until his death. His interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls was continuous and resulted in his PhD dissertation on the eschatological protagonists of the Yahad community and further in several articles, an introductory monograph, and an edited book. In Old Testament literature his favorites were the books of Isaiah, Daniel, and Psalms. He wrote several articles about them and an exegetical monograph about the pilgrim psalms. During his years in Pápa his interest turned to the deuterocanonical literature, and he published ten volumes of the proceedings of the international conferences on this literature in Pápa and Budapest (some of them with collaboration of the present author). He founded a monograph series on Deuterocanonica with five published books. He also wrote a monograph on the Book of Baruch. At the Sapientia in Budapest, he started a monograph series of the chair of Biblical Studies, which numbered twelve books during his time. In his last years he concentrated on the interpretation of the

iconographic decorations of the Jewish synagogues in Antiquity and published several articles on the topic. Altogether he published 3 English, 1 German and 14 Hungarian books, 15 English and 10 Hungarian volumes as editor or co-editor, and 40 English, (French and German) and 73 Hungarian articles in books and journals (see his bibliography in this book). In his writings he concentrated primarily on the texts and the topics themselves, and the discussion of the secondary literature was only secondary for him.

Géza organized a series of ten international conferences on deuterocanonical literature concentrating first on individual books and later on different common characteristics and themes. From 2010 he was the vice president of the Society of Hungarian Hebraists. His scholarly work was acknowledged with the József Schweitzer award in 2019.

As a friend: Géza was very open. After the first meeting with him, one felt as if he were an old friend. He enthusiastically discussed all personal, religious, cultural, political, or scholarly topics with others. He not only wanted to share his own ideas with his friends and conversation partners, but he was really interested in how the others thought about the world. On the other hand, he was very extroverted and wanted to involve his friends in the knowledge he had of a very wide range of topics, from the culinary and wine specialties of different regions in Hungary to the cultural particularities of the Armenian or the Dutch people. His style of storytelling was entertaining and enlightening, and he had a great sense of humor. The less hair he had over the years, the greater his beard grew. Some of these characteristics were mentioned by some of the contributors of the present volume.

Twenty four papers of twenty five colleagues commemorate Géza Xeravits in this volume, but several other colleagues expressed their emotions and good memories of him, even if they could not deliver a paper. Just to mention some of them: Stefan Schorch, Eibert Tigchelaar, Michael Duggan, Nicholas Allen, Stefan Reif, Renate Egger-Wenzel, Marcus Witte, Eugen Ulrich, Sidnie White Crawford, Oda Wischmeyer, Marko Martilla, Ulrike Mittmann, George Brooke, Kristin de Troyer, Candido Don Dionisio. Hungarian colleagues will commemorate him with a Hungarian volume.

In his short life Géza Xeravits was a fruitful scholar, he, however, could not show all the truth as the angel Raguel in the book of Tobit does, but he always tried to “reveal with due honor the works of God” (Tob 2:11).¹ Although we are sad that he is not with us anymore, according to our belief, all of the works and secrets of God are already revealed to him for eternity.

József Zsengellér

¹ This cite from the Book of Tobit was the working title of the present volume.