In Memory of Géza G. Xeravits (1971–2019)

Géza G. Xeravits was an extraordinary Hungarian scholar in the field of Old Testament and Early Judaism. He was interested in Antiquity in general, and in Jewish studies in particular. He was always able to connect with his audiences, students and friends by means of his brilliant intellectual and entertaining personality. He was born in Budapest on February 20, 1971, and died after a long struggle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) in Zsámbék on September 27, 2019.

Géza Xeravits graduated from the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest. His first position was a lectureship at the Saint Athanasz Greek Catholic Seminary, Nyíregyháza. He did his Ph.D. in Theology at the University of Groningen (2002). From 2002–2009, he was Assistant Professor and Professor at the Reformed Theological Academy, Pápa. From 2009–2015, he was Professor and Chair at the Department of Bible, Sapientia College of Theology, Budapest. From 2015–2018, he was Professor of Old Testament at Selye J. University, Komárno (Slovakia). In his last year he was research professor at the Theological Faculty of the Károli Gáspár Reformed University, Budapest.

His main field of study was the Qumran community, and the group's literature and theological thinking. More broadly he was interested in the Old Testament, especially the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Psalms on the one hand, and the so-called deuterocanonical literature on the other. Later his interest turned to the representations of biblical themes in late antique synagogue art.

His first book on the scriptural interpretation of the Qumran community was published already before his graduation in 1995. He founded the Hungarian Biblical journal *Studia Biblica Athanasiana* of which he was editor in chief until his death. He received several scholarships that allowed him to study in Leuven and Groningen. He was the doctoral student of the head of the Qumran Institute of Groningen, Florentino García Martínez, in the Netherlands, where he wrote his dissertation which was published by Brill.¹ During his work in Pápa he was the co-founder and secretary of the *Shime'on Centre for the Studies of Hellenistic and Roman Age Judaism and Christianity*. At this institute he edited the book series *Simeon Books*, *Deuterocanonica* and *Horizonts*. His main initiative was organizing a series of international conferences on deuterocanonical books in Hungary. The proceedings of these ten conferences were published by Brill and de Gruyter. After becoming ordained as a deacon at the Saint Maurice Monastery

¹ King, Priest, Prophet. *Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library*. STDJ 47. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003.

(Bakonybél) in 2006, he founded the academic book series of the Monastery (*Lectio divina*). He completed his habilitation² at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University in 2008 and as a result he became a full professor at Pápa. He became a member of the international advisory panel of the *International Society for the Study of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (ISDCL) and member of the advisory board of reviews of the journal *Biblische Notizen*.

After his employment at the Sapientia College of Theology as professor and chair of Biblical Studies, in 2009 he founded the book series of the chair (*Bibliatudományi Tanszék Kiadványai*), which produced twelve volumes. In 2010 he was elected as the vice president of the Hungarian Society of Hebraists, a position which he held until his death. During his work at the Selye János University starting in 2015 he was awarded a scholarship of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), as a result of which he published his monograph: *“Take Courage, O Jerusalem...”: Studies in the Psalms of Baruch 4–5* (de Gruyter 2015). As a recognition of his scholarly work he received the József Schweitzer Memorial Prize in 2017. During his work at Károli University he prepared the volume of his collected essays *From Qumran to the Synagogues: Selected Studies on Ancient Judaism* (de Gruyter 2019). He was able to enjoy the pleasure of its publication before his death.

Next to his specifically scholarly work, he took part extensively in organizing and guiding pilgrim journeys to the Holy Land, and to countries of ancient Christianity like Georgia, Armenia and Ethiopia. As an intellectual distillation of his pilgrimages he published three books.³ From his last book series: *On the Edges of Christianity A kereszténység szegélyein* which was planned to discuss Armenia, Ethiopia and Georgia, only the portion on Armenia was finished; and the manuscript is not yet published. During his teaching at Pápa he even climbed the Himalayas in Nepal. Through the mixture of his intellectual talent and the recognition of his personal achievements, his lectures and friendly discussions with him became superlatively enjoyable intellectual pilgrimages for the students and professors who worked with him.

2 Könyvtár a pusztában bevezetés a holt-tengeri tekercsek nem-bibliai irodalmába. Deuterocanonica Subsidia 1. Bevezetések. Pápa: PRTA-L'Harmattan, 2008. Later published with some changes and redaction in German: Géza G. Xeravits/Peter Porzig. *Einführung in die Qumranliteratur. Die Handschriften vom Toten Meer*. Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2015.

3 Jeruzsálem—a Föld köldöke. Szent városok, szent körzetek Tibettől Etiópiáig. Budapest: L'Harmattan—Agra, 2012 (Jerusalem—the Navel of the Earth: Holy Cities, Holy Districts from Tibet to Ethiopia); Zsidó és keresztény szent helyek a késő-ókori Palesztinában. Budapest: Agra, 2016 (Jewish and Christian Holy Places of Palestine in Late Antiquity); Egy nap Jézus nyomában: Az Olajfák-hegyétől a Szent Sírig. Budapest: Biblical Museum Budapest, 2017 (A Day in the Footsteps of Jesus: From the Mount of Olives to the Holy Sepulcher).

As an international scholar, he wrote 17 books, edited 25 volumes and published 113 academic papers in Hungarian and international journals and books.⁴

Géza Xeravits took part in the discussions during the Budapest conference in 2017 that helped plan the ISDCL conference that produced the papers for the present volume. Dedicating this volume to the memory of his life and work, we thank God for the academic and intellectual richness we received from discussions with Géza Xeravits and from reading his scholarship. He wrote: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?”—asks the angel. But he could ask: why do you look for the light in the darkness?, or the winner among the losers? This message shouts loudly into the closed greyness of our loneliness, it lights into the darkness of our bleakness, it opens our graves and leads to life.”⁵

József Zsengellér

⁴ For a full bibliography see <https://m2.mtmt.hu/api/publication?cond=authors;in;10011978&cond=category.mtid;eq;1&page=1&labelLang=eng>. For full texts of publications see: <https://selyeuni.academia.edu/GezaXeravits>.

⁵ *Krisztus köztünk...! Gondolatok a Szentírásról*. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2009, 33. His staggering last thoughts written by means of a computer able to read the motion of his eyes was published some days before his death: “My all is living” (“Mindenem él”), *Embertárs* 93 (2019): 203–15.