

Valuable Septuagint Collection Donated to TWU Library

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On June 9, 2008, I travelled to Toronto to pack up and ship to TWU/ACTS the personal library of renowned Septuagint scholar (and a former teacher of mine at the University of Toronto), Prof. John Wevers.

Some years ago while he and I were at a conference in Toronto, Prof. Wevers mentioned to me that he was looking to donate his library to an academic institution that was interested in augmenting and developing its library collection. Aware of the important and valuable items that it included, I immediately said (on faith!) that TWU would take it. He subsequently bequeathed his library to TWU, stating that it would come to us either after his death or, prior to that, when he no longer had need of it. My thanks go to Ted Goshulak and to Bill Badke for recognizing how much this donation would strengthen our collection, and for their support in seeing things through to this present outcome.

Prof. Wevers is now at age 89 quite frail physically and, since April 15, has been living in a retirement care facility. Nevertheless, on June 10, the day on which two of his sons (Bob and John Jr.) and I had agreed to begin the big job of packing, he was determined to come to the house and supervise. I was impressed by the determination he manifested in twice that day slowly and painfully navigating the narrow set of stairs to the basement where most of the books were stored, and, for good measure, making a trip upstairs to check what might be left there as well. I was also pleased to observe that what he lacks in physical strength and mobility he makes up for in continuing mental sharpness and a sense of humour.

Bob and John Jr. were of great help in this process. It took 59 boxes (45 of 1.5 cubic foot capacity, 13 of 2 cubic foot capacity, and 1 smaller box) to get all the books packed up. We estimated the weight to be over 3000 pounds. As we were working and Prof. Wevers sat watching us, I was impressed again by the many important monographs, series and reference works that we were handling—perhaps 3000 or more volumes in all—some of which are now rare and virtually impossible to get elsewhere, and I remarked to him what an amazing resource this is. It is, as he said, without doubt a unique collection in all of Canada.

He and I chatted at various times throughout the day, and he expressed his thankfulness to God for the life and career he has had. His voice quavering with emotion, he said at one point that he felt he had made a worthwhile contribution to the world of Old Testament scholarship. I agreed wholeheartedly.

He, his sons and I shared lunch at this house that he had bought in 1954 and in which he had lived until April 2008. Later that evening, after all the books had been boxed and carried to the main floor, we went out for dinner at Swiss Chalet. I was pleased to see that he still has a very healthy appetite!

Needless to say, June 10 was a special day for Prof. Wevers and for me. In letting go of his library, he was in effect acknowledging that his long and productive career in academic scholarship is now over. He now rests in the sufficiency of God's grace to see him through the last phase of his life's journey. In my case, I could not have envisioned when I first met Prof. Wevers as an undergraduate that I would, a good many years later as Director of the Septuagint Institute, have the privilege of participating in this passing of the torch from U of T to TWU/ACTS, symbolized by the move of his great library across the country. It is quite an amazing turn of events to think about, given that the program in Septuagint Studies established at U of T by Prof. Wevers more than 50 years ago has, sad to say, ceased to exist, while at TWU/ACTS such a program has very recently begun to take shape and is now the beneficiary of this important addition to our library collection.