

ARTICLE II.

THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE SEPTUAGINT.

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Did the writers of the New Testament endorse the Septuagint Version?

This question is often answered, without hesitation, in the affirmative; and the reason commonly given is, that these writers have generally quoted the Septuagint translation, instead of the Hebrew original. There is not, however, perfect agreement among scholars upon this latter point.

One¹ affirms that of three hundred and fifty quotations of the Old Testament in the New, there are not more than fifty which differ from the Sept.; while another² reckons one hundred and thirty-six citations (or rather Old Test. passages cited), and says that of these there are seventy-two in which the New Test. exactly corresponds with the Hebrew, and but seventeen in which the Sept. is followed, though it diverges to some extent from the Hebrew. And yet another³ says that of two hundred and sixty-six citations there are but six passages which differ materially from the Hebrew.

Believing that these diverse statements are not necessarily contradictory, and wishing, for our own satisfaction, to ascertain the truth, and especially to determine the justice of Dr. Hessey's claim, we have been led to attempt anew a comparison of the Hebrew and Sept., with the citations in the New Testament.

We were forewarned, indeed, by Ayre, in Horne,⁴ that "the uncertainty attending all such attempts [i.e. to construct tables representing this agreement] is too great to render a

¹ Grinfield's *Apology for the Septuagint*, p. 145.

² Fairbairn's *Herm. Man.*, p. 452.

³ Hessey's *Moral Difficulties of the Bible (Second Series)*, p. 250.

⁴ *Introduction (13th ed.)*, Vol. ii. p. 178.

classification of the kind of practical use"; and by Thrupp, in Smith,¹ that "It could only result in failure were we to attempt any merely mechanical account of variations from the Old Test. text, which are essentially not mechanical."

But while we freely admitted that the tables formerly published in Horne were far from satisfactory, inasmuch as the work was not very thoroughly done, and the New Test. text used was the Textus Receptus; and while we saw that many facts in the comparison could not be expressed mathematically, we did not see that these considerations should restrain us from reducing to mathematical form those facts which *could* be thus exhibited. We thought that it would be possible, on the basis of certain specified texts, to determine *exactly how many* distinct quotations in the New Test. agreed literally with the Sept., and approximately how many of these did not agree substantially with the Hebrew; that it would be possible to determine how many quotations agreed exactly in sense with the Hebrew, and how many of these did not agree substantially with the Sept.

We thought that the determination of such questions as these could not fail to afford us aid in deciding, further, whether the New Test. writers did generally quote the Sept.; and that, in any case, such data must be more valuable than those assumptions and *indefinite* mathematical statements which are often made the basis of an answer to this question.

We have reckoned two hundred and fifty-three direct quotations of the Old Test. in the New. Some of these might, perhaps, reasonably be rejected, and some others might be added, but these include those which the writers of the New Test. claim as quotations, and present a fair sample, to say the least.

The New Test. text used is that of Tischendorf's Eighth Critical Edition, and the Sept. text is the Roman, with the single exception that we quote Heb. i. 6, from Psalm xcvi. 7; though the exact words of the New Test. occur in the

¹ Dictionary of the Bible, p. 2239 b.

Roman text in Deut. xxxii. 43. We do so because the words are here wanting in the Hebrew, and the reading of Cod. Vat. at this place is more diverse from the New Test. than is that in the Psalms.

It is, of course, to be remembered, in comparing the figures we give, that the citations differ much in extent; the longest, in Heb. viii. 8, etc., being more than fifty times as long as the shortest in Rom. vii. 7.

We have made the New Test. text our standard of comparison, marking the Old Test. texts according to their agreement with it in a scale from zero to eleven. Those passages in the Sept. which are identical both in sense and form with the New Test. we have marked eleven. Ten, in both Sept. and Hebrew, indicates identity in sense, such, in the case of the Hebrew, as we might expect if those who quoted had no knowledge of the Sept., but translated with literal exactness from the Hebrew. All marked above four agree in substance with the New Test., and those below five do not. Inasmuch as the vowel-points of the Masorites did not exist when these citations were made, we have not felt bound to adhere to them in all cases. We give a summary of the results:

	Whole N. T.	Epistles to Heb.
Total number of citations,	253	33
Marked 10 in Hebrew,	77	13
9 in Hebrew,	56	8
between 9 and 4 in Hebrew,	100	10
below 5 in Hebrew,	20	2
11 in the Sept.,	58	9
10 in the Sept.,	23	5
9 in the Sept.,	50	8
between 9 and 4 in the Sept.,	93	10
below 5 in the Sept.,	29	1
10 in Hebrew and 11 in the Sept.,	46	9
10 in Hebrew and between 4 and 11 in the Sept.,	29	4
10 in Hebrew and below 5 in the Sept.,	2	0
9 in Hebrew and below 5 in the Sept.,	4	0
above 4 in Hebrew and below 5 in the Sept.,	14	1
11 in the Sept. and between 4 and 10 in Hebrew,	13	0
11 in the Sept. and below 5 in Hebrew,	0	0

	Whole N. T.	Epistle to Heb.
Marked 10 in the Sept. and below 5 in Hebrew,	0	0
9 in the Sept. and below 5 in Hebrew,	3	1
above 4 in the Sept. and below 5 in Hebrew,	5	2
below 5 in both Hebrew and the Sept.,	15	0

It thus appears that those quotations which are substantially identical with the Sept. are *four* more than those which thus agree with the Hebrew, but that the quotations which in the Sept. do not substantially agree with the New Test. are *nine* more than those which in the Hebrew thus disagree.

In the Hebrew, the extreme cases of substantial agreement are with the quotations in Matt. xiii. 14; Acts xxviii. 26 and Eph. vi. 2, 3; and the extreme cases on the other side of the line, or below five, are with Acts xiii. 41, xv. 16, and Heb. x. 5. In the Sept. the line of substantial agreement is drawn between such passages as those quoted in Rom. x. 11; xi. 8, marked five, and such as are quoted in Matt. xxvii. 46 and Rom. x. 15, marked four.

While there are no passages which are marked ten or eleven in the Sept. and below five in the Hebrew, there are two which are ten in Hebrew and below five in the Sept. And while there are but five passages which are above four in the Sept. and below five in the Hebrew, there are fourteen which are above four in the Hebrew and below five in the Septuagint.

It is often said that the Sept. is constantly quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Tholuck¹ speaks of "the universal use of the Sept. instead of the Hebrew text" in this Epistle, and hence concludes that it is not infallible scripture. We have given, in the second column of our summary, the results of an examination of these quotations. The most that can be said, is, that the Sept. is quoted somewhat more frequently than the Hebrew. Even this statement is rendered doubtful by a consideration of the character and extent of the quotation at viii. 8, etc. It comprises more than three times as much matter as the average of New Test. quotations, is more than twenty-five times as extensive as some others in this

¹ Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. xi. p. 612.

Epistle, and includes more than one-sixth of the matter therein quoted. It is not, however, identical with the Sept. in sense, but is an exact translation of the Hebrew throughout, with the exception that the words, "saith the Lord," are in the New Test. omitted at the close of vs. 11. How any one can speak of "the *universal* use of the Sept. *instead* of the Hebrew," in view of such passages as this, and the quotations in x. 30 and xii. 20, 21, we cannot comprehend.

It may be said, indeed, that passages may be quoted from the Sept. though its text is not given with literal exactness. True, but how much more likely would translations from the Hebrew be to depart from literal exactness?

An inspection of our summary fully justifies the language of Dr. Hessey, but affords nothing contradictory to the statements of Grinfield or Fairbairn. These last, however, give us *partial* statements which *seem to be complete*, and which are thus, though not false, misleading. Fairbairn is not just to the Sept., for he does not tell us definitely how many quotations agree with the Sept. Grinfield, on the other hand, like many others, fails to inform us how many quotations agree with the Hebrew.

We may say then, that on the whole, the New Test. citations, according to the texts which we have used, agree somewhat better with the Hebrew than with the Sept.

We cannot, therefore, adopt the view of those who, finding it much easier to compare Greek with Greek than Greek with Hebrew, and observing that the Sept. text very much resembles the New Test. quotations (and especially in that it is in the same language), leap to the conclusion that the writers of the New Test. quote the Sept. almost invariably. This would be very much like the inference that a man must be derived from his mother's brother, rather than his mother, since he resembles him in almost as many particulars, and above all is of the same sex.

In regard to the texts which we have used, we may remark, that evidently the Jews, who were the almost sole custodians of the Hebrew Bible from the time of Christ to that of our

oldest Hebrew MSS., if they altered the text at all, would be far more likely to depart from the New Test. text in those passages which were quoted than to conform to it.

The text of the Sept. is as yet undetermined. As Dr. Davidson says,¹ "The text of the version never attained a stable condition." The Roman text is at present a *textus receptus*, but it was edited in 1586, under the supervision of the pope, by men who thought it an inspired version, but useful chiefly as an aid to the interpretation of the Latin Vulgate and the holy Fathers, and who everywhere exhibit the critical acumen which we might expect to find in men of that age, holding such views.

Mr. Selwyn² has, like many others, assumed that it is identical with Cod. Vat. 1209. But, as Mr. Abbot has said,³ "This is a grave error. It is safe to say that in the forms of proper names alone, it differs from the Vat. ms. in more than one thousand places." Tischendorf, in the *Prolegomena* to his edition of the Sept., though quoting from the preface to the Roman edition what is there said concerning a literal transcription of Cod. Vat., yet says in conclusion,⁴ "And thus has been clearly proved, what was for a long period readily suspected, that the Roman editors did not recede from the (Vat.) ms. in the orthography merely, as they professed, but also in the readings in a great many instances."

Mr. Selwyn finds upon comparing the Roman text with ten other editions and MSS. through the first eight chapters of Exodus, that it is more unlike the Hebrew than any of them are, and hence concludes that it is nearer the true text, and that their better agreement with the Hebrew has arisen from Hexaplar MSS. But a comparison of the Roman text with a fac-simile of Cod. Vat.⁵ through the first eighth of these eight chapters gives us thirty-one variations of Cod. Vat. from the Roman text. Of the three which are significant two agree with the Hebrew, and the other is indeterminate

¹ *Biblical Criticism*, Vol. i. p. 197.

² *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. "Septuagint." ³ p. 2913 b.

⁴ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. x. p. 90. ⁵ Vercellone and Cozza, Rome, 1869.

on account of difference of idiom. If we might venture to multiply here by eight, we might find Cod. Vat. to differ nearly as much from the Roman text as do some of the editions and MSS. which he mentions.

The variations of the Roman text from Cod. Vat. were surely not derived from older MSS., for the MS. next in age used by the editors, was of the eighth or ninth century.

A collation of the citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews (which in view of the language of Tholuck above we may presume to be a fair specimen) with the three oldest MSS. of the Sept. accessible; viz. Codices Vat., Sin., and Alex. gives us the following :

	Vat.	Sin.	Alex.
Total number of variations in,	24	48	¹ 47
Total significant variations,	8	32	36
Number of latter agreeing with Hebrew,	4	13	8
Number of latter differing from Hebrew,	1	9	12
Number of latter agreeing with New Test.,	2	11	20
Number of latter differing from New Test.,	4	17	13

Thus it is seen that the earliest authorities, the Vat. and Sin., differ from the Roman text, in that they agree more nearly with the Hebrew but are more unlike the New Test., while the Alex., which is later, differs in that it agrees better with the New Test. but is more unlike the Hebrew. We naturally infer that MSS. earlier than the Vat. and Sin. would, if we had them, exhibit a greater contrast with the Roman Text and the later MSS. than these do, and hence that the Sept. text of the time of the apostles would differ yet more from the Roman text in the same respects; viz. that it would resemble the Hebrew more and the New Test. less in those quotations in which the New Test. differed from the Hebrew.

A consideration of the history of that period leads us to the same result. The New Test. text was current for more than two hundred years before our oldest MSS. were written or Origen's Hexapla was copied. It was commonly bound in

¹ The readings of Cod. Alex. were taken from Tischendorf's Sept., hence the variations of orthography do not all appear. The other MSS. were collated in fac-simile.

the same volume with the Sept., and this Greek Bible was to the mass of Christians their only scriptures. Naturally the Sept. text drifted, in those passages which differed from the New Test., away from the unknown Hebrew, and toward the well-known New Test. text. When Christian scholars began to learn Hebrew the tendency, in some localities, was in the opposite direction, as the character of Cod. Alex., and others mentioned by Mr. Selwyn, indicates. This is all which his facts can prove.

Thus many passages in which the quotations seem to be so closely conformed to the Sept. but deviate from the Hebrew, may be simply examples of assimilation of the Sept. to the New Test. in ignorance of the Hebrew. Christians of that age would certainly reverence the words of Jesus and his apostles quite as much as those of the Old Test. writers, and would also feel much more sure of the purity of their New Test. than of their Old Test. text, since the former had been just now committed to writing, but the latter was known to be a translation and often transcribed.

The fact which appears in our summary above, that the Sept. surpasses the Hebrew in substantial identity with the New Test. but not in substantial agreement in sense, is one which needs explanation, and it can hardly be accounted for on any other hypothesis than this.

There are also passages which seem to have been thus tampered with. In Rom. iii. 10 etc., we have a quotation of passages evidently gathered from six different places in the Old Test. But in the Roman text of Psalm xiii., where, as all agree, the first one of these occurs, we find the rest interpolated in exactly the order of the New Test. Scholars are generally agreed as to the explanation of this phenomenon.

In Heb. i. 6 we read "*προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ,*" and in the Roman text of Deut. xxxii. 43, exactly the same words. Cod. Sin. does not now contain the Pentateuch, but Cod. Vat. reads "*προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ υἱοὶ θεοῦ,*" in Deut. xxxii. 43, thus betraying an assimilation of this kind, later even than the time of Cod. Vat. Many

such changes must, from the nature of the case, ever remain undetected ; but there are doubtless many which patient investigation would reveal.

Jesus, quoting Gen. ii. 24, says, " And they twain shall be one flesh " (Matt. xix. 5). The words for " twain " being found in the Roman text of the Sept., but not in the Hebrew, it has of course been said that Jesus has here endorsed the Sept. Some have even understood this to imply that Jesus thought the whole Sept. Old Test., including its senseless paraphrases of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, to be inspired scripture. And, indeed, if he deliberately preferred the Sept. to the Hebrew, it may be difficult to escape this conclusion. But is there not another alternative ? If Jewish translators had naturally added these words three hundred years before, because seen to be so obviously implied in the Hebrew, and, unchallenged and approved by the Jewish nation, these words were now received as authoritative scripture, is it not strange that their bearing upon this question of divorce had not been perceived before ? Is it not strange that Jesus' unanswerable argument, which was thus but a quotation of words long familiar, was not anticipated, and thus the attempt to ensnare him seen from the first to be futile ? If, however, the Jews, though acquainted with this passage in the Sept., esteemed the Hebrew the supreme authority, and Jesus founded his argument upon the Sept., would not his deadly enemies have objected to the propriety of his quotation, as indeed their posterity afterward did when Christians quoted the same Septuagint ?

We say, Jesus evidently here assumes his divine right to use scripture according to its real meaning ; and, as in the case of the words " at the bush," to develop that which was latent in the word, but which, when once developed, could not be gainsaid nor resisted. We would ascribe the wisdom of this exegesis to Jesus, rather than to the Sept. translators ; and the existence of *οἱ δύο* in the Roman text to the mistaken zeal of a mediaeval transcriber. Especially when we remember that this passage has perished from Cod. Vat. (as

well as Cod. Sin.), and that the compilers of the Roman text used, upon this portion of the Pentateuch, no MS. so old as the ninth century.¹

Another question arises: *Did the writers of the New Test. quote the Sept. intentionally?* Of course, if they did not, they did not endorse it as such. The masses of the Jewish people of that age must have gained their knowledge of the scriptures chiefly through the reading and interpretation in the synagogue. This instruction began in early youth and continued through life; and by means of it, the devout Jew, cultivating his memory as we need not at this day, would become very familiar with the Old Test. scriptures, the sole text-book used in his education, and the subject-matter of almost all his investigations and discussions. He might possess and read for himself a MS. of this book; but, on account of the expense involved, this privilege would depend more upon his wealth than upon his intelligence. He did not greatly feel the need of this MS. copy when a large portion of this law was read to him every Sabbath, if not every day; and when he could obtain at any time any information he might wish from men supported by the people and set apart by God for the special work of interpreting this book; when, indeed, his nearest neighbor might, upon request, repeat to him whole sections of this treasured word. In such an atmosphere as this the writers of the New Test. were born and lived. Moses of old time had in every city them that preached him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day.

As the Hebrew was read, it was translated into the vernacular of the people who heard.² This would generally be Greek throughout the Roman empire. In Palestine it might sometimes be Aramaic, but commonly (as a Greek New Test. intended for similar public reading proves) it was Greek even here. Those who read and interpreted would be acquainted with the Sept. version. They would find it very

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. ix. p. 589, 590, note 1.

² See Lee on Inspiration, p. 359, note 3, and Kitto's Cyclop. of Bib. Lit., Art. "Synagogue."

useful in this translation and interpretation, and would borrow its words, its phrases, and its sentences. These would be stored in the memories of a Greek-speaking people, and become to them an integral part of their Old Test. scriptures. Judging, also, from our own observation, not to say experience, we should expect a farther modification of phraseology in their daily quotations in conversation and worship.

Now, suppose men thus educated to engage in a work which would require them to quote the Old Test. scriptures in public preaching and private conversation habitually, and for many years; and then, at last, to commit this preaching and conversation to writing. Suppose the Spirit of Truth to bring all things to their remembrance which Jesus had spoken to them, which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning him,—all things, indeed, which pertain unto life and godliness,—and so to guide them into all truth that they shall approve no error, but shall have in many cases a deeper spiritual insight than the original writers had; and we shall be able to give a better explanation of the phenomena of New Test. quotations than we could give on any other hypothesis. And yet all this might occur without any intention to quote or approve the Sept. We could only say that the Inspirer of the New Test. considered those passages which agreed with the Sept., whether derived from it directly, indirectly, or not at all, to be a satisfactory expression of his divine truth.

In confirmation of this we may observe that though the reading of the Old Test. is mentioned at least twenty-one times in the New, there is not one undoubted example of reading which was not either in the synagogue or by a learned man. We cannot be sure concerning the Ethiopian eunuch, but it is very probable, to say the least, that he was a learned man. The word translated “sought” in Acts xvii. 11 may mean “read,” but it is not the same word as that used of the Jews who sent Pharisees to John the Baptist, and who are thereby proved to have been learned (comp. John i. 19, 24 with v. 33, 39). It often means simply “sift,” or, as it is twice translated in 1 Cor. ii. 15, “judge.”

How remarkable, if the apostles possessed MSS. of the Old Test., and read for themselves, that in all his recorded expositions to them of the Old Test., Jesus never once reminds them of what they had read, or counsels them to read those words which testify of him ; but tells them (Matt. v. 21, etc.), quoting, in part at least, the Decalogue, "Ye have heard," etc., and advises them (Matt. xxiii. 3) to "observe and do all whatsoever" the learned Scribes and Pharisees, though "hypocrites, fools, and blind," *bid* them to observe. At the same time he often reminds these learned men of what *they* had read, and advises them to "search the scriptures" (John v. 39).

Again, these apparent quotations of the Sept. are often very peculiar. Warrington¹ has conclusively shown that it is impossible to assign good reasons for the choice of the Sept. in those instances in which it seems to be preferred. Fairbairn² says of the Sept. : "Sometimes it is followed with great regularity for a series of passages, and then it is suddenly abandoned, at places where its rendering is not less, or is even more, exact. Thus at Matt. xxviii. 9, 10. So again at John xv. 25, the Sept. is departed from where it literally renders the original, but in the two following citations it is implicitly followed." He admits that this treatment of the Sept. is to him inexplicable.

If the writers of the New Test. quoted from MSS., how shall we explain the fact that in many passages they depart from both Hebrew and Sept., as in Matt. xxi. 5, 13, and in many other places ?

Shall we suppose a corruption of our MSS. of both Hebrew and Sept. texts, and, as would be often required, both to the *same extent*, and in the *same way* ? We might about as easily thus explain *all* variations of the New Test. citations from the Old Test. texts. Besides this, it has been observed³ that the writers of the New Test. sometimes agree with each other with great verbal exactness in passages in which they

¹ The Inspiration of Scripture, chap. 3.

² Herm. Man., p. 455.

³ Lee on Inspiration, p. 358.

agree with neither the Sept. nor the Hebrew (comp. Matt. xi. 10 with Luke vii. 27, and Mark i. 2; also 1 Pet. ii. 6, 8 with Rom. ix. 33).

These facts cannot be explained on the supposition that these writers quoted directly from mss. in their possession, but all becomes plain and consistent on the hypothesis which we have suggested above.

We therefore conclude: 1st, That, on the whole, the Hebrew text agrees more nearly with the New Test. citations than the Roman text of the Sept. does. 2d, That the Roman text is not the same as that of our earliest and best mss., and doubtless differs still more from the Sept. text of the time of the apostles. 3d, That it would appear that many passages in the Sept. which agree literally with the New Test. quotations have been assimilated to the New Test. text. 4th, That this assimilation often involved a departure from the Hebrew. 5th, That thus the true text of the Sept. would doubtless differ more from the New Test. citations than the Roman text does, and thus much more than the Hebrew text does. 6th, That we do not find any positive evidence that the writers of the New Test. used mss. of either the Sept. or the Hebrew. 7th, That we find much to indicate that these writers obtained their knowledge of the Old Test. scriptures chiefly through the oral teaching of others. 8th, That we also find evidence that they have often quoted this oral scripture as guided by the Holy Spirit. 9th, That we do not find any difficulty in supposing that they *always* quoted the Old Test. scriptures thus. 10th, That we find it impossible to explain *all* the peculiarities of New Test. citations on the hypothesis of a direct quotation from mss. 11th, That we find no decisive proof that the writers of the New Test. ever intended to quote the Sept. version. 12th, That finally, we fail to find the evidence that the writers of the New Test., or their Divine Guide, have endorsed as inspired scripture, or as a faithful translation, the Sept. version of the Old Testament.