THE USE OF THE SEPTUAGINT IN THE CRITICISM OF THE HEBREW BIBLE *

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1. TWO REFERENCES TO THE PAST

Before dealing with the specific topic of my paper it may be worthwhile to point out in passing two historical precedents that might widen our vision and shed more light on the whole problem. I am referring to two important moments in the transmission of the biblical text: Origen’s Hexapla and the Polyglot Bibles.

With the Hexapla a synchronic system of comparison of texts was introduced, so that a rudimentary method of using and evaluating the Septuagint for the criticism of the Hebrew was possible. In accordance with the procedure of Hellenistic philology in Alexandria, Origen established the comparison of the two texts, word by word, without even considering the diachronic evolution of both texts. Nevertheless his respect for both traditions, Hebrew and Greek, led him to maintain entirely the LXX text, not daring to omit the sections absent from the Hebrew.

The other significant moment is represented by the Polyglot Bibles, the first of which, the Complutensian, was the editio princeps

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1 ἠπίστομον εἰς τὸν λόγον ἐκ τῶν λόγων τήν ἔκθεσιν τοῦ Ἱεραπετρίου περιεχομένου τοῦ Ἰεραπετρίου περιεχομένου. ORIGEN, Comm. in Mat. XIV, 14.
of the Greek Old Testament. In spite of the religious prejudices, these gigantic enterprises were characterised by a deep respect for the different biblical traditions. They offered a synoptic edition of the ancient texts with numerous cross-references, many of them with a pedagogical aim. The texts edited depended on the manuscripts available at that time. This was why the Complutensian published in the Greek column what can be considered broadly speaking a Lucianic text. The critical approach was basically the same as that of Origen or Jerome. Even J. E. Grabe’s edition (1707-20), based on the recently discovered Codex Alexandrinus, applied to this manuscript the obeli and asterisks in the same way as Origen did with the koine text of the Septuagint. The only criterion for the restoration of the biblical text was still the Hebraica veritas. These early editors ignored the fact that the Hebrew had undergone development and that a genuine reading might have been preserved in the Greek Bible.

2. THE FIRST CRITICAL COMMENTARIES

In the framework of the last two centuries I should like to emphasize that the interest in the Septuagint and its possible use for the restoration of the Hebrew text emerged in connection with the Lucianic text of Samuel. In the second half of the 19th century, the text of the Lucianic manuscripts began to be taken into consideration for Hebrew textual criticism. The names of Theinus, Wellhausen, and Driver are the most representative of this new approach. Prior to them a great part of the manuscript tradition of the Septuagint had been known thanks to the Holmes-Parsons’ edition (1798-1827), while the text of the Lucianic manuscripts (19-82-93-108) had been identified by Ceriani and Vericellone.

Though there were some predecessors, it was the merit of Wellhausen to have appreciated the high textual value of the LXX of Samuel. This author realized that in this book a family of Greek manuscripts differed strikingly from the textus receptus. Furthermore, by retroversing into Hebrew the passages that disagreed with the textus receptus, he was able to demonstrate that the Lucianic text preserved a textual form whose Hebrew Vorlage represented a shorter recension. Interestingly enough, Wellhausen was the first scholar to put forward the suggestion of editing separately the whole text of these manuscripts in order to recover the true text of the Septuagint.

In the early 19th century, parallel to this stream of textual reevaluation of the Septuagint, another current of interpretation arose which explained the differences between the Septuagint and the textus receptus as a result of the influence of ancient Jewish exegesis. This last tendency was mainly represented by Z. Frankel. It is worthwhile to emphasize that these two tendencies, already present at the very dawn of critical studies, broadly speaking and with the obvious nuances inherent to the various periods, would survive until our present times. The first one certainly underlines the value of the Septuagint for the restoration of the Hebrew as the main source of textual variants. The second admits the extraordinary importance of the Septuagint for the history of Jewish exegesis and thought, but practically denies it the possibility of being used as an appropriate instrument for Hebrew textual criticism.

This pendulum of biblical criticism which, as Reider says, is never altogether stable but veers from one extreme to another.

7. J. WELLHAUSEN, Der Text der Bücher Samuels.
8. J. WELLHAUSEN, Der Text der Bücher Samuels, pp. 223-224.
according to time and place," could find the two opposite poles in the sayings attributed to two prominent scholars: The enthusiastic words of Prof. Hitzig on one side: «Meine Herren! Haben Sie eine Septuaginta? Wenn nicht, so verkaufen Sie Alles, was Sie haben und kaufen eine Septuaginta!»; and on the other, the extreme difference reflected in the sentence of William Robertson Smith at the end of the 19th century: «... even if we possessed the Septuagint in its original form it would be necessary to use it with great caution as an instrument of textual criticism.»

In spite of the misdeeds made by some authors who resorted too easily to the conjecture, and in spite of the difficulties produced by the lack of critical editions of the Septuagint, the best scholars of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th were able to sail successfully through the «roaring sea of variants» to use the expression of Ludwig Kohler.

Some of these commentaries, like Drivers' Samuel, Cornill's Ezzechiel, Montgomery's Kings and Daniel etc., still stand as models of a cautious and wise use of the Septuagint for the criticism of the Hebrew Bible. Everyone recognizes that while this use of the Septuagint is not an easy task, with the aid of some rules in textual criticism it should not be an impossible dream.

An important step forward in the adequate use of the Septuagint, was the whole work of P. de Lagarde, especially his Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverben and his Preface to Liberum Vetus Testamenti Canonicorum Pars Prior Graece. His plan of isolating the three major recensions of the Greek Bible, established the bases for a critical use of the Septuagint. His principal intuition, corrected by the criticism of his pupil Rahlfis and the other editors

14 Taken from J. L. SCHULTZ, Probleme aus der Geschichte des Septuaginten-Übersetzers. «EX ORDO LEX», 7, Leiden (1906), 397-398, p. 381.
16 For more details on this subject see J. REIFER, The Present State pp. 312 and 292-296.
17 Taken from W. GOODNIN (ed.), The Test of the Septuagint. Its Corruption and their Emendation by the late Peter Witters (formerly Katz), Cambridge 1975, p. 2.
19 Some criteria for the right use of the Septuagint are pointed out in H. B. SWETE, An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, p. 445.

3. THE USE OF THE SEPTUAGINT IN THE MODERN EDITIONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE.

If we exclude the Polyglot Bibles (Ginsburg's edition mentions the Septuagint only sporadically and in retranslation as an additional support of some Hebrew reading), the use of the Septuagint in the printed editions of the Hebrew Bible is very recent. For the first time the evidence of the versions is systematically presented in the apparatus in the first edition of the Biblia Hebraica by Kittel (BH1, Lipsiae 1905/6); 2nd edition, BH2, 1912). Its Prolegomena opens with the following paragraph: «Hanus editionis Biblicorum Hebraicorum proprium est, quod textui masoretico et gravissimae lectiones variae codicum Hebraicorum manu scriptionum versuumque veterum et consilia ad emendandum textum traditum in notis adduntur».

How is the Septuagint, the ancient version most quoted in the apparatus, used? The manual edition of Swete (1887; 2nd ed. 1895) was employed, giving in general the reading of the Codex Vaticanus as if it were the Septuagint. Besides that, in most cases, the Septuagint is presented through retroversion into Hebrew and its evidence is often added to that of the Samaritan Pentateuch, Targum, Vulgata or Byzantine. Consequently Kittel's Biblia Hebraica became, as Driver noted, the best collection both of variants from the versions and of conjectural emendations. But with time, scholars lost the habit of consulting the Brooke-McLean apparatus, and a sound discretion in using this material was too often neglected. BH1, together with some commentaries of the beginning of this century became more and more the target of criticism: their abusive resort to unnecessary

18 «The ancient Versions are referred to only when they agree with a reading of the text, or with a probable conjecture», Preface to C. D. GINSBURG, Pentateuchus. Diligenter Restitvs, London, 1904.
emendations undermined the respect due to the Hebrew text. The voices of Moses Gaster, S. R. Driver and especially of J. Reider, denounced this arbitrary way of emending the Hebrew according to the Septuagint, for it overlooked the idiomatic expressions in both languages, the free renderings, the meaning of the context etc. 20. In 1936 Reider concluded one of his most significant articles on the topic with the following wish: «Let us hope that the new and improved edition of Kittel’s Bible, which is now in process of publication under the editorship of Kahle, will be free of these incongruities and hasty concoctions» 31.

BH appeared in 1936 based, as is well known, on B19a of Leningrad 22. But, unfortunately, the lack of critical editions once more prevented the right use of the LXX, as Katz, Orlnsky and Ziegler among others successively pointed out 33. As an example of this criticism we may quote the summarising words of P. Katz: «One may say with truth: Never was the LXX more used and less studied! Unfortunately much of this misuse survives en BH. I have long given up collecting instances. Ziegler after ten pages of corrections from the Minor Prophets alone, rightly states that all the references to G must be rechecked. H. M. Orlnsky who comes back to this point time and again is not very far from the truth when he says that not a single line in the apparatus of BH is free from mistakes regarding G». 24.


23 B. KITTEL, P. KAHLER, Biblia Hebraica, Stuttgart 1936.

24 Cf. D. W. GOODING (ed.), The Text of the Septuagint, p. 2: «If this [i.e. a critical use of the Septuagint] had been done earlier, the apparatus criticus throughout Kittel’s Biblia Hebraica, wherever it refers to the translations of the MT, and even sometimes where it purports to emend the Hebrew text, would differ considerably from its present form»; H. M. ORLINSKY, The Septuagint - Its Use in Textual Criticism, BA IX 2 (1946) 23-54, p. 24: «Had they [i.e. the scholars] made an independent and thorough study... of the Septuagint, they would not have abused the LXX so frequently and unjustifiably as to create from it a Hebrew text (Version) which never existed outside their own imagination. Those it surely something wrong with an approach to the LXX which has resulted in such far-reaching divergence between the preserved Hebrew text on the one hand and, on the other, the Hebrew text which is thought to be derived from the LXX»; and J. ZIEGLER, Studies on Parvarah der Septuaginta im Zeitschriftenkompass ZAW 59 (1944) 107-111, p. 120 and —, Zur Septuaginta-Vorlage im Deuteronomium ZAW 72 (1960) 237-262, pp. 237-238.

24 P. KATZ, Septuagintal Studies in the Mid-Century, p. 43.

The recent publication of BH 2 (1967-77) has tried to avoid some of the criticism made to BH. 1 Retrospections from the LXX have been reduced, the presentation of the evidence is more cautious, deviations from the textus receptus are offered first in Greek and only then a possible retrospection is suggested, etc. But in spite of these precautions and the short time it has been in circulation, even BH has not escaped criticism. Tov denounces the too frequent mechanical retrospections that overlook the achievements of the last years in the area of the ancient versions, and likewise criticises the system of notation that may lead to confuse retroverted actual variants and emendations 25. Wevers in preparing the critical edition of the Greek Deuteronomy realised also the absolute lack of scientific criteria in the presentation of the Greek evidence in BH. He criticises not only the inadequacy of the furnished data that can be misleading through lack of formal correction and clarity in the quotation, and by misrepresentation of the textual tradition etc., but also the excessive accumulation of information absolutely irrelevant for Hebrew textual criticism. The most simple paleographical mistakes (for example, confusion between Ιριδο and Ιδομ in Byzantine manuscripts) as well as the translation techniques or the information of the context are ignored. For the book of Joshua, Greenspoon asserts that most of the caveat applied to BH still stand for BH, though for different reasons: «The latter’s critical apparatus omits the majority of the most outlandish suggestions of its predecessor, but perhaps for that reason seems less provocative and blander, if not also more accurate. Also, we continue to meet with inaccurate and gratuitous application of material from the Septuagint» 26.

It seems premature to express a judgement concerning the HUBP, that takes as its basis the Aleppo Codex, since a complete book has not yet been published. Let us, however, outline a first appreciation also founded on the numerous theoretical articles devoted to this subject by the members of the Jerusalem team. The editors have paid great attention to the many problems posed by the use of the


Septuagint in concrete books like Isaiah and Jeremiah. These previous studies on the text-critical use of the Septuagint have had positive consequences on the use of this evidence: a clear control and reduction of retroversions, the distinction between variants and pseudo-variants, a better classification of the typology of variants, and an actual effort of finding out alternative explanations (for instance, of an exegetical character) to these variants. By introducing the system of double notation, a bridge has been built between the two secular tendencies, the textual and the exegetical one, in the evaluation of the Septuagint. Besides that, I appreciate the revaluation of the Septuagint condensed in the following sentence recently written by Goshen-Gottstein: «By and large, the judgement stands that for the purposes of TCT the Greek is decisive, the Syriac and the Latin offer a certain amount, and the Aramaic and the Arabic offer very little».

4. THE IMPACT OF QUMRAN

As we have seen, the misuse of the Septuagint in certain commentaries, which too uncritically employed the retroverted Septuagint to emend the Hebrew text, and the mechanical application of the same method in BF provoked a reaction in the decade that preceded the Qumran discoveries in favour of the textus receptus to the discredit of the LXX. In addition, partial studies like these of Nyberg on Hosea had detected the deficiencies of the Septuagintal text compared with the Hebrew. Consequently, in this period the deviations of the Septuagint from the Hebrew were generally attributed to the idiosyncrasies of the translators (even to clear signs of incompetence), to their elaboration of the ancient text guided by exegetical or theological reasons, to the different translation tech-

...niques etc. These were, broadly speaking, the arguments of Gehman, Wevers, de Boer and the Scandinavian school until Nyberg.

As Barthélemy says: «Scholars were more and more reluctant to admit that every variant of the LXX was based on a Hebrew Vorlage distinct from the MT».

Orlinsky certainly admits in 1941 that the Hebrew manuscripts used by the translators of the Septuagint sometimes disagreed with the Masoretic text not only in small details but also recensionally in books like Jeremiah, Job or Esther, but he added immediately: «But those text-traditions have long perished driven out by the Hebrew text that was used by the Mishnah and Talmud, by the Tosefta, Aquila, Symmachus, Origen, Jerome from the first-second to the fifth centuries A. D.».

The Qumran discoveries had a strong incidence in OT criticism, in the Hebrew as well as in the Septuagint. Regarding the latter, the appearance in 4Q of Greek texts one or one and half century after the Alexandrian translation, basically in accordance with the textu-tradition represented by the great uncials, contributed to strengthen the Lagardian theory on LXX origins. On the other hand, these fragments as well as the findings of the Twelve Prophets coming from Nahal Hever have proved that recensional activity in the Septuagint did not start with Origen nor with the Judaeo-Christian polemics, but goes back to a period very near to the times of the translation itself.

Concerning the Hebrew text of some books, the appearance in Qumran of fragments related to the Vorlage of the Septuagint against the textus receptus provoked a new turn in textual criticism. The most striking point was undoubtedly the presence in Jeremiah and Samuel of Hebrew texts that were different from the textus receptus on a literary level but coincided with the Vorlage of the...
Septuagint in those books. This evidence soon provoked a boom of studies on the biblical text and the birth of new theories, the best known being the theory of the local texts, exposed by Cross in 1953 and maintained with some slight modifications in 1975. This theory has been followed by a certain number of Cross' pupils, more cautiously accepted and even rejected by others. But, granted that the concrete reconstruction of the history of the biblical text proposed by Cross may be more or less vulnerable, nowadays everyone accepts the fact of textual pluralism during the two centuries that preceded the process of standardization of the consonantal text. Furthermore, today there is a tendency to admit a wider pluralism than that expressed by the theory of local texts, a pluralism that even questions the very concept of «textual type». The consequences for the evaluation of the Septuagint are obvious: not only must its readings be taken seriously, because theoretically at least all its disagreements with the textus receptus may go back to an Hebrew Vorlage prior to the standardization of the text; but in some books the translation itself was made before the final redaction of the book was completed in Hebrew.

With regard to the Septuagint we could properly speak of a nemesis of Qumran in an analogical way as Turner spoke of the papyrological nemesis that «awaits those who, without good reason, throw away explicit ancient testimony».

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5. PRESENT TENDENCIES IN TEXTUAL CRITICISM

In the near future textual criticism, and concretely the use made of the Septuagint for the restoration of the Hebrew text, should be governed by the two following principles: the fact of textual pluralism in the period that precedes the Common Era; and the fact of pluralism or rather polymorphism of texts within the Septuagint itself, that is, the apparent differences in the translation process and transmission from book to book.

Thanks to the Qumran discoveries we are aware of something that neither Origen nor Jerome were able to guess, in spite of their awareness of the enormous differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew text available to them: that the Septuagint contains actual textual and literary variants of the Hebrew, so that both traditions, Greek and Hebrew, must be respected in their own right, without reducing or accommodating the one to the other. In some books of the OT the practice of quoting the LXX for the restoration of the Hebrew has become not only utopian but also methodologically inadequate. In books like Proverbs, Job, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Joshua-Kings, and probably 1 Ezra, Daniel and Esther, the Hebrew and the Greek transmit different textual traditions that in the present state of our knowledge cannot be reduced to a common original.

As long as the priority of one tradition to the other cannot be proved, one cannot use the one in order to correct the other, because it is not always easy to distinguish between the textual and the literary evolution of the different traditions. In these cases before trying to reach the original, the most cautious procedure would be to reconstruct each of the traditions in which a certain book of the OT is offered to us. The sociological dimension of texts alluded to by Talmon demands also a respect for the integrity of the different traditions carried out by the different religious communities. From this point of view perhaps the procedure adopted by the Polyglot Bibles has something to teach us even today: to edit synchronically the different ancient texts that circulated.

41 D. BARTHÉLEMY, Études d'histoire du texte, pp. 368-369.
among the distinct communities and which constitute sensu pleno the Books, τὰ βιβλία. 43

As a matter of fact these considerations do not exhaust all the possible uses of the Septuagint for Hebrew criticism. This postquaranian emphasis on textual pluralism and the peculiar Vorlage of the Septuagint must be completed with a set of additional observations.

For the great deviations the Septuagint’s fidelity to its Vorlage has been reinforced. But this fact has contributed to increase caution in the small deviations. In the latter cases, before recurring to the hypothesis of a different Hebrew Vorlage, one must first eliminate other possible explanations that have become more plausible as new critical editions of the Septuagint have appeared, and our knowledge of the translation techniques, Hebrew lexicography and Jewish exegesis has improved 44.

The use of the Septuagint in small deviations must be guided by the following principles elaborated by Wevers after his long experience in the edition of the Göttingen Septuagint: a) First of all the nature and limitations of the target language must be fully understood in contrast with those of the source language 45. In other words, special attention must be paid to the fact that grammatical elements cannot be translated; before any induction about a different Vorlage, or about the theological background of the translators, the first question to answer must be in what measure the deviations of the Septuagint from the Hebrew are conditioned by the linguistic possibilities of the Greek to express the source language; b) before quoting a witness of the Septuagint one should have a certain confidence that the reading in question is true Septuagint and not the result of an inner Greek corruption or a scribe’s error; and c) before properly using the LXX in Hebrew textual criticism one must understand the particular points of view under which the concrete translator made his translation.

To sum up, Qumran has made it clear that the evidence of the Septuagint must be taken seriously. Expressions employed at the beginning of our century to design the Septuagint as «paraphrase of the Hebrew», «a theological commentary» or even «a Greek Tar-gum» 46 should, in my opinion, be definitively forgotten as they have proved misleading.

In the major deviations from the textus receptus the fidelity of the translators to a different Hebrew text has been demonstrated. Consequently, the Septuagint reflects according to Tov’s words, «more significant variants than all other textual witnesses together. Furthermore, apart from a few scrolls from Qumran, the LXX is the only source that contains a relatively large number of variants which bear on the literary criticism of the OT» 47. In these cases, at our present state of knowledge, the autonomy and peculiarity of the translation must be respected as a witness of a literary tradition in its own right, and the use of the Septuagint as a source of data to restore the Hebrew text seems to be inadequate 48.

Once the basic fidelity of the translators to their Vorlage has been confirmed, before introducing an emendation in the Hebrew, any small deviation should be carefully examined in the light of the linguistic background of the translators, the translation techniques and the Jewish exegetical traditions.

In spite of all these reservations, in some books the LXX variants used intelligently, with great caution and under the above premises, can be an important aid for OT criticism. At the same time it must be stressed that this ad hoc use of the Septuagint to clarify difficult Hebrew passages is only but a minimal part of the right use of this version, which requires a much more comprehensive acknowledgment of its entire literary tradition and of the peculiar problems inherent to the different books.


46 Cf. N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, Introducción a las versiones griegas de la Biblia, Madrid 1979, pp. 34 and 71-81.


48 Cf. D. BARTHELÉMY, Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament, pp. 111: «Mais le Comité a souci de plus en plus évidemment le texte de ne pas différer le texte Massoretique. Aussi de ces formes traditionnelles ne doit être traitée comme une épreuve d’ où l’on tirent les bonnes leçons avec lesquelles on reconstruit un texte original». 
RESUMEN

Tras una breve alusión a la Hexapla y a las Biblias Políglotas, el autor analiza el uso de la Septuaginta en los comentarios bíblicos de los dos últimos siglos y en las ediciones modernas de la Biblia hebrea. A continuación describe el impacto de los descubrimientos de Qumrán en la valoración que se hacía de la Septuaginta para la crítica textual del Antiguo Testamento. Finalmente señala las tendencias actuales en la crítica textual bíblica y expone los principales criterios que deberían regir el uso correcto de la Septuaginta para la crítica textual de la Biblia hebrea.

SUMMARY

After a brief reference to the Hexapla and the Polyglot Bibles, the author analyses the use of the Septuagint in the editions of the Hebrew Bible. He then describes the impact the Qumran discoveries have had on the evaluation of the Septuagint for the textual criticism of the Old Testament. Finally, he points out the present tendencies in biblical textual criticism and explains the main criteria to be followed for the correct use of the Septuagint in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible.