

WHAT THE SEPGUAGINT ACTUALLY IS

Though it is often difficult to document, the undeniable fact is that the LXX extant – the one in actual usage today, is nearly 90% the text found in Codex Vaticanus B [a Greek uncial manuscript dated around AD 350; most of the rest of the wording is from the text found in Codex Sinaiticus Aleph (a)]. Thus it is that very nearly all references in the literature which allude to the Septuagint actually pertain to *only* two manuscripts, Vaticanus B and Sinaiticus a. This is especially true of Codex Vaticanus B.¹ Dr. Ira M. Price, who is certainly no ally to the position and findings of this author (FNJ), nevertheless clearly discloses (as does Swete and Kenyon) that the text of all the "standard" LXX editions over the past 400 years – the 1587 Sixtus, Holmes-Parsons, von Tischendorf (Swete, p. 187), Swete, the Brooke-McLean great Cambridge edition, Rahlfs 1935 edition – has rested mainly on Vaticanus B along with Aleph (= "S" for Sinaiticus or a) and Alexandrinus A.²

"... the great edition of the Septuagint in ... (the sixteenth century AD) was that published under the patronage of Pope Sixtus in 1587. It is in the main the text of Vaticanus, though with divergences that are estimated to total four thousand. ... Surpassing all these in importance was the work of Robert Holmes and James Parsons, published at Oxford in 1798-1827. It is a great edition of the Septuagint in four folio volumes. Its text is that of the edition of 1587. But the new feature of the work was its comprehensive critical apparatus; it gave variant readings of about 25 manuscripts, together with much patristic evidence, and the readings of the previous editions. In 1850 Tischendorf published a revision of the Roman texts with variants from S (= a), A, and C; ... However, the most common edition of the Septuagint today is that published by Henry Barclay Swete at Cambridge, England, in three volumes in the years 1887-1894. It employs the text of the best extant manuscript of each part of the Old Testament - most commonly Vaticanus – but notes the variants of a few others of most importance. Yet Swete's edition was only a preliminary publication of the great Cambridge project on the Septuagint. ... publication under the names of Alan E. Brooke and Norman McLean since 1906, when Volume I, *The Octateuch*, began to appear ... The work differs from Swete's only in the greater scope of its critical apparatus. ... The printed text, it is to be observed, is that of the Swete edition - in other words, mainly the text of Vaticanus - and where this is lacking, then of the best other manuscript available.. The critical material is arranged in a great series of footnotes.

At the same time, a group of German scholars under the direction of Professor Alfred Rahlfs of Göttingen were at work likewise on an edition of the text of the Septuagint. But they aimed at a "critical" text. That is, instead of presenting the evidence and leaving it to each individual scholar to make his own decision as to the correct reading, as is the principle of the Cambridge group, the German scholars undertook to appraise the evidence themselves and to give what they believed to be the correct text. They have printed, thus, not the text of any known manuscript but a 'made text' arrived at by their use of the evidence. Whether the Cambridge or the Göttingen is the better procedure remains an open question. Both have advantages and disadvantages; each person must decide for himself which serves him best. Professor Rahlfs also published a preliminary edition; it appeared in 1935 with the title, *Septuaginta, id est. Vetus Testamentum Graece juxta LXX*. The text is based mainly on a collation of the manuscripts (Alexandrinus) A, (Vaticanus) B, and (Sinaiticus) Aleph."³

¹ Ira M. Price, *Ancestry of Our English Bible*, 3rd ed., rev., (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956, [1906]), pp. 69-70; Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, 9th ed., Vol. II, (London, Eng: Spottiswoode and Shaw, 1846), fn. 1 on p. 282 and fn. 3 on p. 288; Henry B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1989 [1914]), pp. 181-190; Sir Frederick G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 5th ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958), p. 121. Codex Alexandrinus A is also an LXX MS and is a major source for variant reading considerations; see Price, p. 70 and Horne's fn. 1 on p. 289, fn. 3 on p. 299, & fn. 2 on p. 301.

² Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, *op. cit.*, p. 121: "The text of the current editions of the Septuagint are mainly derived from this (i.e., Vaticanus B - FNJ) manuscript".

³ Price, *Ancestry of Our English Bible*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70.

Yet this little known reality – that nearly 90% of the text in the LXX is taken from Codex Vaticanus B – is generally concealed from the student. This is because when one consults any standard LXX reference on a reading, he finds many various sources cited throughout the work other than Vaticanus (or a).¹ As a result, he is left with the impression that the LXX before him is a fully representative text of all these many ancient sources. But this is grossly misleading as all those citations merely represent the few thousand variant "corrections" that have been consulted and/or added to the main text; yet the central text is almost exclusively that of B and a.

Hence a false impression has been created, and the student is left deceived as though the extant LXX prepared for general use is something other than it is. Indeed, what real significance can rightly be attached to these few thousand references when one weighs them against the vast bulk of the c.430,000 words (Apocrypha excluded) contained in the Greek Old Testament? These two uncial MSS² also contain Bel and the Dragon, Tobit, Judith etc. Thus, it must be recognized that the Septuagint which we actually utilize in practical outworking, the LXX which is cited almost 90 percent of the time, is actually the LXX that was *written* more than 250 years *after* the completion of the New Testament canon – and by a "Catholicized Jehovah's Witness" (Origen) at that!

But again note the extended quote from Dr. Ira Price's *Ancestry*. He clearly discloses that the text of all standard words of the LXX over the past 400 years has rested mainly on Vaticanus B along with smaller yet significant wording from Alexandrinus A, and Sinaiticus Aleph (a).

Indeed, Vaticanus B and Sinaiticus a are the same two manuscripts which modern textual critics primarily rely upon in New Testament criticism – yet they are among the most corrupt MSS extant! No small wonder modern translations, based as they are upon these MSS, read so differently from the King James Bible.³ According to a 500 page study by Herman C. Hoskier which detailed and discussed the errors in Codex B and another 400 on the idiosyncrasies of Codex Aleph, Sinaiticus A and Vaticanus B were found to differ from each other in the Gospels alone about 3,036 times – not including minor errors such as spelling or synonym departures.⁴ Their agreements are even fewer – yet these two manuscripts are said by critics to be "the best and most reliable".

Under the influence of B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, the 1881 Revision Committee made between eight and nine changes every five verses and in about every ten verses, three of those changes were made for "critical purposes".⁵ In so doing, their justification was almost exclusively the authority of

¹ Edwin Hatch and Henry Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 3 Vols., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987 (orig. 1897).

² These MSS (B and Aleph) are probably two of the 50 copies of the Bible (or at least first generation copies of these 50) which Constantine commissioned Eusebius to prepare and place in the major churches throughout the empire. See Frederick Nolan, *An Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate or Received Text of the New Testament*, (London, Eng: F.C. and J. Rivington Pub., 1815), pp. 25-42, 94, 99; Price, *Ancestry of Our English Bible*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

³ Floyd Nolen Jones, *Which Version is The Bible*, 16th ed. rev. & enl., (Goodyear, AZ: Global Evangelism, Inc. Pub., 1998), pp. 95-96. This and the following 3 paragraphs are taken nearly verbatim from this reference. For more on the above along with the state of the modern versions and the deleterious effect on the text of the New Testament that has been imposed on it by "lower" criticism, the reader is directed to this reference and to: Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, *op. cit.*, and *Believing Bible Study*, (Des Moines, IO: Christian Research Press, 1977), Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1977), John William Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, (London: John Murray, 1883), D.O. Fuller, *Which Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: International Pub., 1970), Jasper James Ray, *God Wrote Only One Bible*, (Junction City, OR: Eye Opener Pub., 1980), Jakob Van Bruggen, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament*, (Winnipeg, Canada: Premier Printing Ltd., 1976) and *The Future of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1978), Hoskier's work cited in the fn. below, and any of the numerous works by Dr. D.A. Waite.

⁴ Herman C. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies, A Study and an Indictment*, 2 Vols. (London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., 1914), Vol. II, p. 1.

⁵ Charles John Ellicott, *Submission of Revised Version to Convocation*, (n.p., 1881), p. 27. Bishop Ellicott chaired the 1881 Revision Committee.

only two manuscripts, Vaticanus B and Sinaiticus a (Aleph). The testimony of Vaticanus B alone is responsible for nine-tenths of the most striking innovations in the Revised Version¹ – and as nearly all of the newer translations except the *New King James Version* are based upon the same radically different Greek text, they display like novelties.

We are constantly being told that Vaticanus B and Sinaiticus a are the oldest extant Greek manuscripts, hence the most reliable and best; that they are in fact the Bible. Yet the new Greek text which has replaced the *Textus Receptus* in the minds of the vast majority of the scholars represents the private enterprise of but two men, two very religious albeit unregenerate men, Westcott and Hort. These men based their "Bible" almost completely on Origen's fifth column for their Old Testament and on his edited New Testament. Their New Testament readings are almost exclusively derived from only five manuscripts, principally from only one – Vaticanus B. Moreover, it must be seen that the testimony of these two corrupted manuscripts are almost solely responsible for the errors being foisted upon the Holy Scriptures in **both** Testaments by modern critics!

"B" supplies almost 90 percent of the text for all the Greek N.T.'s since 1881; these in turn have served as the base upon which nearly all the new translations since 1611 have been made. In other words, they have used one manuscript to the exclusion of nearly all others! Seven percent is from Sinaiticus Aleph, almost three percent from Alexandrinus A, a portion from Uncial D (which is extremely corrupt), and the small remainder from Codex L and a few other manuscripts. For the most part, this is as close as the destructive critics have thus far come to "recovering" the original text of the New Testament. Hence, the Scriptures are seen as being in somewhat of a state of "evolution" by those who reject the fact of God's having preserved His Word for its constant availability and use by the body of believers as He indicated He would do.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (II Timothy 3:16-17, KJB)

Remember, the Septuagint manuscripts exhibit considerable significant differences among themselves and disagree with the Hebrew Masoretic Text in many places. Both cannot be correct. As the Hebrew Masoretic text is the inerrant, infallible Word of God, the Septuagint should be seen as spurious and rejected. We cannot even be certain that the LXX which we have extant today (written c.350 A.D.) is a faithful reproduction of the c.260 B.C. original – if such a translation ever existed. To the contrary, we have seen that the proponents of the LXX freely admit that it is full of interpolations, corruptions, and that the original readings are "yet to be recovered".²

Again, the "Greek Old Testament" or LXX that is being offered to the Church today is, for the most part, the thoroughly debased and contaminated Vaticanus B along with Sinaiticus a. Yet these two Codices are copies of Origen's 5th column (or copies of copies) which Eusebius prepared for the pagan Emperor Constantine.³ Traveling under the cloak and camouflage of the label "Septuagint", these

¹ Frederick Charles Cook, *The Revised Version of the First Three Gospels*, (London: Murray, 1882), pp. 227, 231.

² *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (ISBE)*, James Orr (gen. ed.), Vol. IV, (Chicago, IL: The Howard-Severance Co. Pub., 1937), p. 2725. Here the *ISBE* acknowledges that, due to the multitudinous corruptions and interpolations which sometime extend to that of whole paragraphs, the "original" text has yet to be recovered. Indeed, it is admitted that not a single verse is without an array of variant readings and hence its "original" reading is uncertain. The *ISBE* is but one among many sources that could be cited in evidence as to the facts regarding the nature of the LXX. It should be noted that the contention by the *ISBE* (as well as many others) that the Pentateuch portion has "survived in a relatively pure form" is a gross overstatement. If it is meant that it is pure in comparison to that of the rest of the LXX, I concur, but if it is intended to imply, as the context indicates, that it is faithful when compared to the Hebrew Masoretic Text - such is simply not a true representation of the facts and is badly misleading. A few hours spent comparing the two will convince the reader so that he will not have to vacillate between the opinions of differing authors.

³ Constantine died the high priest of Baal, the sun god and god of storm, as well as the "head" of the church. See Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1916). Numerous other writers also so attest.

two manuscripts have been set before unsuspecting conservative scholars, many of whom are aware of their corrupting influence on the New Testament text but have not recognized the MSS in this disguised presentation. Having been thus put off their guard by this duplicity, these evangelicals (along with many trusting pastors and laymen) have unknowingly accepted them in this masked form and do not realize that the Holy Text of the Old Testament is thereby being compromised. O' Joshua and princes of the people, the Gibeonites have again disguised themselves and deceived us for we have "asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD" concerning the matter (Josh. 9).

Thus the simple truth emerges that the Septuagint in use today is nothing more than the private enterprise, the *private interpretation*, of one man – and that man was an unregenerate religious pagan Greek philosopher! But the Holy Scriptures are not subject to private interpretation:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation
(II Peter 1:20).

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