

AN EVANGELICAL APOLOGY FOR THE SEPTUAGINT

by
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He who would read the New Testament must know Koine; but he who would understand the New Testament must know the Septuagint.²

—Sidney Jellicoe

A single hour lovingly devoted to the text of the Septuagint will further our exegetical knowledge of the Pauline Epistles more than a whole day spent over a commentary.³

—Adolf Deissmann

The importance of the Septuagint for study of the NT cannot be underestimated.⁴

—Stanley Porter

The title of this paper is intentional, capitalizing on the ambiguity of the word *apologetic*. Of course, one could apologize *for* the Septuagint, and I am afraid this is how many evangelicals feel about the Greek Old Testament's existence. On the other hand, one could *offer a defense* of the Septuagint, and that is the sense I am intending to use throughout this essay. Jellicoe, Deissmann, and Porter above stress the essential nature of Septuagint study for the understanding of the New Testament. Nevertheless, most evangelical seminaries do not offer study in the Septuagint, and many evangelical pastors have never read the Old Testament in the Septuagint—even if they have gained proficiency in Greek. The purpose of this paper is not to outline the reasons for such a sad state of affairs; rather, I would like to convince the reader that the Septuagint is worthy of scholarly attention. To accomplish this goal, we must first discuss what is meant by “the Septuagint.” Second, we must

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²Sidney Jellicoe, “Septuagint Studies in the Current Century,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 199.

³Adolf Deissmann, *The Philology of the Bible: Its Present and Future* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 12.

⁴*Dictionary of New Testament Background*, s.v. “Septuagint/Greek Old Testament,” by Stanley E. Porter Jr., 1104.

trace its provenance, showing why it is important for evangelicals today. Third, we will assess the challenges the Septuagint brings to the evangelical interpreter. Finally, I will conclude with some suggestions as to how the Septuagint can be helpful to evangelical study.

TERMS FOR THE SEPTUAGINT

The Septuagint (LXX) popularly refers to the Old Testament translation of the Hebrew into Greek. This popular definition does not differentiate recensions, but instead is used in the same way one might say “English Bible” to refer to the NIV, ESV, and NASB. Originally, however, the term referenced the *translators* (70 or 72 and thus LXX) more than the *text* that was translated. Further, these first translators only translated the Pentateuch. For this reason, some specialists distinguish the original translations of the non-Pentateuchal books by calling them “Old Greek.” Accordingly, the abbreviation LXX/OG indicates the entire OT corpus while also emphasizing the diversity of this ancient text.⁵ Other scholars reserve the designation Septuagint for a critical text that has been carefully weighed to determine the original text (also referred to as the Ur-Septuagint or the Proto-Septuagint). Finally, some scholars include the Apocrypha within the Septuagint, while others consider it separate. Within this paper, Septuagint and LXX are used in its popular sense to refer to any Greek recension of the Hebrew Old Testament without reference to the Apocrypha.

TEXTUAL AND TRANSMISSION HISTORY

To understand how the LXX can aid the modern student of Scripture, we must examine the LXX’s transmission history. *The Letter of Aristeas*, composed in the 2nd century B.C., indicates that King Ptolemy II of Egypt desired to collect the books of the world in his library. Recognizing the importance of the Hebrew Scriptures to his subjects, he called for six elders from each Hebrew tribe in Jerusalem to come to Alexandria to make a translation of the Pentateuch into Greek. After arrival in Egypt, the translators completed the task in only 72 days. Notably, the letter contained a curse on anyone who would modify the text.⁶

Few, if any, believe *The Letter of Aristeas* is a true historical account. Obvious historical errors⁷ and the miraculous nature of the translator’s timetable lead scholars to conclude that the letter was fabricated.⁸

⁵W. Edward Glenny, “The Septuagint and Biblical Theology,” *Themelios* 41 (August 2016): 265.

⁶*The Letter of Aristeas* (London: Macmillan, 1904).

⁷Demetrius, who was supposedly the librarian, was actually exiled when Ptolemy II took power. Further, Menedemus, who was spoken of as present at the banquet welcoming the Jewish translators, had passed away several years prior (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Septuagint,” by Melvin K. H. Peters, 5:1096).

⁸Theories on the reason for the fabrication include the following: it may have been

Nevertheless, while the text may be false, many believe it does contain some kernels of truth. Bruce Metzger provides a list of facts upon which scholars agree concerning the letter:⁹ First, it is highly probable that the translation was done in Alexandria Egypt, where a large number of Jews lived during the third and second century B.C. Enculturation led to a loss of the Hebrew language among the populace, necessitating a translation.¹⁰ Second, the entire Pentateuch was translated at one time, resulting in a unity of style, vocabulary, and philosophy of translation. Third, it is doubtful that 70 or 72 people worked on the translation. A rabbinic version of the same story indicates only five translators, which is much more probable considering the unity of the text. Fourth, while the translators do not appear to have come from Palestine, the Hebrew scrolls used for the translation may have come from there. Finally, the vernacular of the translators betrays an Egyptian vocabulary, affirming that the translators were, likely, not from Palestine.¹¹

The history of the text after the original translation is hard to discern. From what modern scholars can determine, the text of the non-Pentateuchal books was translated over a period of a few hundred years, evidencing a wide range of translation philosophies from relatively free to woodenly literal.¹² The discovery of the Qumran documents has shed much light on the history of the LXX, but it has also raised more questions.¹³ For instance, what were once considered post-Christian era readings (Lucian and Theodotion) were discovered to be pre-Christian era readings. In light of the Qumran documents, we now know that later recensions (second and third centuries A.D.) had access to LXX manuscripts that are much earlier, yet are no longer extant.

While our knowledge of the transmission history from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D. is limited, our knowledge of second century A.D. recensions/translations is more secure.¹⁴ The LXX was widely used by both non-Christian as well as Christian Jews in the

written as a defense of translating the Hebrew; it was written as an apologetic piece for the divine law to the Egyptians; or it was written as a defense of the current or new text against another Greek text (*ibid.*).

⁹Bruce M. Metzger, "Important Early Translations of the Bible," part 1, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (January–March 1993): 38–39.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 37–38.

¹¹Examples include *χουου*, a vessel or cup (Gen. 44:2); *φιβις*, ark (Ex. 2:3); and *παπυρος*, papyrus (Job 8:11) (Everett Falconer Harrison, "The Importance of the Septuagint for Biblical Studies [Part 1]," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112 [October 1955]: 345).

¹²See the chart on the range of translation philosophies in Porter, "Septuagint/Greek Old Testament," 1102.

¹³See William W. Combs's essay for a concise analysis of the impact the Qumran documents have made on Septuagintal transmission scholarship ("The Transmission-History of the Septuagint," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 [July 1989]: 255–69).

¹⁴I call them recensions/translations because "it is not easy, and in some cases not possible, to discern whether a given Greek version is a revision or a translation" (*The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, s.v. "Septuagint," by Leonard J. Greenspoon, 4:915).

first century, but that changed in the late first century moving into the second. Peters explains: “The Jews became alienated from the Septuagint shortly after its adoption by the Christian church not so much because of their unwillingness to share but because, with disconcerting frequency, additions or mistranslations that clearly favored Christian theology were found in the Greek Bible.”¹⁵

Two examples from Isaiah support Peters’s observation. In Isaiah 7:14, the LXX translated $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ as $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ (allowing the translation *virgin*), but later Jewish editions translated it as νεᾶνις (young woman). In addition, the Hebrew of Isaiah 53 has no technical sacrificial terminology, but the original LXX authors used such terminology throughout.¹⁶ Clearly both translations favored a Christian reading, and they can be shown to precede Christian influence on the text. Those rejecting a Christian view desired a new translation clarifying how they believed such passages *should* be translated. Three Jewish translations are known to have been produced in this period, but they exist only in fragments today.¹⁷

Partly in response to the three Jewish translations/recensions and partly due to other concerns, three new translations/recensions were produced by Christians in the third century A.D.¹⁸ The most important of these is Origen’s Hexapla. This massive work is believed to have been more than 6500 pages. Organized in six columns, the Hexapla recorded the Old Testament texts available to Origen in the following order: the Hebrew of his day; the Hebrew transliterated into Greek; Aquila’s recension; Symmachus’s recension; the LXX; and Theodotion’s recension. In some places Origen included up to three more columns depending on the texts he had in his possession. Origen’s purpose seems to have been to recover the LXX by analyzing the various texts available to him.

Two problems plague the history of the Hexapla, limiting its value.

¹⁵Melvin K. H. Peters, “Why Study the Septuagint?” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 49 (September 1986): 178.

¹⁶Karen H. Jobes, “The Septuagint as Scripture in the Early Church,” in *The Sacred Text: Excavating the Texts, Exploring the Interpretations, and Engaging the Theologies of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Michael Pahl (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 29.

¹⁷The first translation/recension is Aquila’s (2nd century). It is exceptionally literal with a “precision that borders on the absurd” (Peters, “Why Study the Septuagint?” 178). The second is Theodotion’s, who seemed to have access to a LXX text that is no longer extant. Some of his otherwise unique renderings are found in the NT use of Daniel, which clearly precedes Theodotion himself (Greenspoon, “Septuagint,” 915). The final translation/recension comes from Symmachus, whose text was designed to conform to the Hebrew with “literal accuracy and a good use of Greek idiom” (Peters, “Septuagint” [ABD], 1098).

¹⁸In addition to the Hexapla produced by Origen, Lucian and Hesychius also produced recensions/translations. Lucian wrote his shortly after Origen, but this translation is controversial, for it appears that some of his translations are ancient, indicating that he was using an otherwise unknown LXX text (Combs, “Transmission-History of the Septuagint,” 264). Hesychius made his around A.D. 400 in Egypt, but it is unknown other than a brief mention by Jerome.

First, Origen, mistakenly assuming the source text for the LXX was the same as the Hebrew he possessed, sought to correct the fifth column in light of his Hebrew text. Though Origen originally included marks to indicate his own additions to the LXX text, later copyists did not always retain these markings.¹⁹ Thus, the result of Origen's work actually muddied the water more than cleared it from the mud. This brings us to the second problem. At 6,500 pages, the Hexapla was nearly impossible to fully copy. Therefore, only the fifth column has been fully preserved, and such copies are tainted by the suspicion that many of the critical marks were not preserved.

The goal of modern scholars is to recover the Ur-Septuagint, the earliest text of the Septuagint.²⁰ As can be seen from the textual history discussed above, this is a complicated field involving numerous moving parts. It may be helpful to highlight the difficulties. First, the earliest witnesses we have to the LXX occur in *translations from* the LXX (Old Latin, Coptic) or in citations from the church fathers. These are of limited value in that one must determine the role the translator had in *interpretation* while translating, and one must determine whether the church father quoted from memory or from an actual LXX manuscript. Second, the Theoditian and Lucian recensions evidence the existence of LXX texts that are no longer extant. Greenspoon adds, "It is possible, even likely, that NT writers had access to forms of the Septuagint that are no longer extant."²¹ Third, there is a pervasive pattern in recensions to modify the text in light of the translator's Hebrew text. If the original LXX was translated from a different Hebrew source than the MT, such recensions tend toward losing those distinctive readings.²²

In light of these challenges, some scholars, including Stanley Porter, argue that it is not necessary to recover the Ur-Septuagint. Instead of "creating a hypothetical text that does not match any ancient manuscript," using one of the ancient uncials (e.g., Vaticanus) witnesses is sufficient.²³ Peters however, calls the use of only one uncial "reprehensible."²⁴ Since we have over 100 MSS and 2000 witnesses to the text of the

¹⁹Ibid., 267.

²⁰Albert Pietersma, "Septuagint Research: A Plea for a Return to Basic Issues," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 296–311.

²¹Greenspoon, "Septuagint," 914.

²²Some have suggested another potential problem; namely, did the church modify the LXX for apologetic purposes? If so, this adds another challenge to recovering the original text. That such modification occurred is undeniable. Justin Martyr debated with Philo over Psalm 96:10 (95:10 in LXX) because Jerome's version included the critical phrase "from a tree," suggesting a reference to the crucifixion. Since we have found no manuscript evidence for such a reading, Jerome's LXX appears to have been intentionally altered. Nevertheless, despite this example, "modern scholarship has affirmed that the Christian scribes did not generally impose distinctively Christian theology on the Greek OT text as it was copied" (Jobes, "Septuagint as Scripture in the Early Church," 35–36).

²³Porter, "Septuagint/Greek Old Testament," 1104.

²⁴Peters, "Septuagint" [ABD], 1104.

LXX,²⁵ hope should not be lost in attempting to recover the original.²⁶

Recovering the Ur-Septuagint is critical for numerous reasons, but for evangelicals, the textual critical implications are perhaps most significant. It is only when we have assurance that we have the original LXX (or something exceedingly close) that we can have confidence to engage in text-critical use of the text.²⁷

As of now, the critical texts available are Oxford's, Cambridge's, and Göttingen's. Oxford's was produced between 1788 and 1827, with the final edition taking into account the "readings of some 300 MSS (including 20 uncials), evidence from the Old Latin, Coptic, Arabic, Slavonic, Armenian and Georgian versions as well as patristic citations."²⁸ Cambridge's LXX was accompanied by Henry Barclay Swete's shorter edition, which was produced in Cambridge in 1894. He used Vaticanus's Old Testament Greek text as a base and modified it in light of other uncial witnesses. Swete's shorter volume was followed by a few more extensive critical texts, but since the last volume published under this project was finished in 1940, it does not appear that the project will be completed.²⁹ Göttingen's Septuaginta is also accompanied by a short volume produced by Alfred Rahlfs.³⁰ Like Swete's version, this was designed as a stand-in until the major Göttingen project could be completed—a project still underway. Like Swete's, Rahlfs's is not a critical text, but it is based on the uncials (Vaticanus, Alexandricus, and Sinaiticus).

The Göttingen project, while still underway, has already been a gift to scholarship, and many anticipate its completion. In those books where there is no Göttingen edition, Rahlfs is usually considered the superior source.

CHALLENGES FOR EVANGELICALS

Despite the widespread recognition of the importance of the LXX, evangelical scholars have not been at the forefront of Septuagint studies. While there are undoubtedly many reasons for this, perhaps some of them stem from the presumed challenges the LXX presents to those who have a conservative view of the inspiration of Scripture. I will

²⁵Peters, "Why Study the Septuagint?" 175.

²⁶Many of the witnesses we have to the LXX predate the great uncials, however they exist in translations *from* the Septuagint—e.g., we have Coptic and Old Latin witnesses going back to the second century A.D. These are clearly not as useful as direct Greek witnesses, but they are still helpful.

²⁷Of course, recensions may be valuable too in that they tended to "fix" the text to reflect the Hebrew then extant. But since the LXX is valuable for its *ancient* witness, we should desire to find the most ancient text for fruitful text-critical analysis of the Hebrew.

²⁸Peters, "Septuagint" [ABD], 1095.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979).

present two apparent problems and then show that neither problem forces evangelicals to disregard their view of inspiration, inerrancy, or their belief in the preservation of Scripture.

Septuagint or Masoretic Text?

Should we abandon the Masoretic Text in favor of the LXX, or, to put it less divisively, should we favor the LXX over the MT? Some have called for the recovery of the LXX as the church's Old Testament.³¹ A few arguments can be asserted for such a position. First, as Peters indicates, "the Hebrew parent of the Septuagint represents a stage in the development of the Hebrew textual tradition earlier than any existing Hebrew witness. Our earliest complete Hebrew manuscripts come from a period some 1,200 years later."³² Since the earlier manuscripts are assumed to have been copied less (and thus introduce less errors), the early date of some complete LXX manuscripts makes them quite valuable. Second, the Bible of the early church was the LXX. Jaroslav Pelikan accurately notes that "it was not until the biblical humanists and the Reformers of the sixteenth century that a knowledge of Hebrew became standard equipment for Christian expositors of the Old Testament. Most of Christian doctrine developed in a church uninformed by any knowledge of the original text of the Hebrew Bible."³³ Further, Jesus and the writers of the New Testament appeal to the LXX more than the Hebrew. Thus, the Scripture they are reflecting on is the LXX not the MT. Should these facts cause us to abandon the MT in favor of a critical LXX or even to prioritize the LXX over the MT?

This question is even more difficult considering the differences between the MT and the LXX. While there are some inconsequential differences (e.g., the order of the books), there are also more significant differences. The Jeremiah text of the LXX is an eighth shorter than its MT counterpart, while Job is a sixth shorter in the LXX. Apocryphal additions provide Esther with 103 extra verses in the LXX, while providing multiple chapters of additional material to Daniel (*The History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and the Song of the Three Children*). Samuel and Kings are so different from the MT that some scholars believe they are built on an earlier, and perhaps better text.³⁴ These differences understandably challenge evangelical interpreters for whom the Scripture is the final rule for faith and practice.

Karen Jobes has championed the position that while the Septuagint is helpful, useful, and even critical in a full-orbed understanding of the New Testament, modern believers should continue to use the MT as

³¹Mogens Müller, ed., *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint* (Sheffield, UK: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2009).

³²Peters, "Why Study the Septuagint?" 179.

³³Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 21.

³⁴Peters, "Why Study the Septuagint?" 180.

the base text and to use the LXX as a tool for refining and understanding that Hebrew text. In the most concise form, she says that we should utilize the LXX in the study but not in the church.³⁵ Jobes offers numerous reasons for this assertion. First, the ultimate goal of the evangelical text critic is the establishment of the original text, for the authority of Scripture is found in the prophet's recording of God's revelation, which occurs in a written text—in this case, a Hebrew text. While the LXX may provide some clues to early Hebrew readings, "the *Hebrew* OT stands closest to [the] autographs."³⁶ In other words, the LXX is a *translation* of the Hebrew, while the MT is a *copy* of the Hebrew. While both translation and copying may introduce errors into a text, few would argue that translations give a better depiction of the original text than copies do. Translation introduces interpretation to a level that copying does not.

Second, because the evangelical's ultimate goal is to recover the original text, the history of the LXX outlined above gives little confidence.³⁷ Granted, the MT is not perfect, and there are certainly places where the LXX offers us a reading that it most likely original;³⁸ nevertheless, this history of the MT is not as checkered with recensional activity as the history of the LXX.

Third, the MT has proven itself as an early, faithful witness to the original documents. Combs is correct when he notes that "the manuscripts from Qumran have demonstrated that a major reason for the differences between the Septuagint and the Masoretic text is that the Septuagint is based on a different Hebrew textual tradition than the Masoretic text, but one that is of equal antiquity."³⁹ Yet the differences between the LXX and the MT are not so different to warrant a rejection of the MT.⁴⁰ Note what Peter Gentry says about the differences between the LXX and MT:

Although a multitude of apparent differences exist between the LXX and MT or other Hebrew witnesses, we must first eliminate issues arising from differences between source and target languages as codes of communication, corruption within the transmission of the Greek version, and

³⁵Karen H. Jobes, "When God Spoke Greek: The Place of the Greek Bible in Evangelical Scholarship," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16 (2006): 222–23.

³⁶Ibid., 225.

³⁷Ibid., 226.

³⁸See some examples in Peter J. Gentry, "The Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16 (2006): 206–9.

³⁹Combs, "Transmission-History of the Septuagint," 258.

⁴⁰See Gentry's article, in which he seeks to show the reliability of the MT even in spite of some of the major differences between it and the LXX. For instance, Gentry shows that the difference in the length of Job is not because of a different Hebrew; rather, scholars have recently shown that it is the product of shortening the original Hebrew. Clearly, then, the MT is to be preferred in the reading of Job (Gentry, "Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament," 197).

differences that are translational and not genuinely textual. When such differences are eliminated (as more than 25 years of careful, patient, and painstaking comparison of the LXX and MT have shown), the first datum from this study is the high level of agreement between the two.... Let us not forget that the LXX witnesses to the fact that our Hebrew text is, for the most part, ancient and pristine.⁴¹

Further, the discoveries in Qumran have strengthened the case for the reliability of the MT, showing that the MT available today is significantly in line with the Hebrew of the Qumran documents.⁴²

Fourth, in Luke 24:44, Jesus categorizes Scripture according to the Hebrew structuring (Law, Prophets, and Psalms) rather than the Septuagintal structure (Law, History, Poetry). One may counter that Jesus frequently used the LXX instead of the Hebrew when preaching and teaching.⁴³ While this is true, it is possible that Jesus did so because it was the translation of the people, and as the Good Teacher, Jesus sought to connect the text in the most significant way to his audience. Whatever else can be said about Jesus's use of the LXX or Hebrew, it is clear that Jesus valued the Hebrew Bible, giving us pause to entirely abandon it in light of the LXX.

Fifth, following both Jerome and Luther, Jobs suggests that it may be "inappropriate that a translation made by Jewish translators should form the basis of the Christian Scriptures."⁴⁴ In illustration, she notes that few, if any, evangelicals would think it appropriate for the church to use the Pentateuch text developed by the Jewish Publication Society.⁴⁵ The LXX is the production of Alexandrian Jews who had not yet received New Testament revelation. And because translation and interpretation are inseparable, modern translators are better able to render the original meaning of the Hebrew. Or as Jerome put it, the LXX translators "translated before the Advent of Christ, and expressed in ambiguous terms that which they knew not. We after His Passion and Resurrection write not prophecy so much as history. For one style is suitable to what we hear, another to what we see. The better we understand a subject, the better we describe it."⁴⁶

⁴¹Ibid., 212–13.

⁴²Jobs, "When God Spoke Greek," 226.

⁴³While one might argue that the Gospel writers contextualized Jesus's teaching and thus modified Jesus's Hebrew citations to LXX citations, this goes against the evidence. Longenecker has shown that Matthew prefers to cite from the Hebrew, but when he records Jesus's citations, they come from the LXX. The most logical explanation is that Matthew was seeking to be faithful to the teaching of Jesus, using the LXX where Jesus used the LXX (Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 26).

⁴⁴Jobs, "When God Spoke Greek," 228.

⁴⁵Idem, "Septuagint as Scripture in the Early Church," 229.

⁴⁶Jerome, "The Prologue to Genesis," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Theodoret, Jerome Gennadius, Rufinus: Historical Writings, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature

Because they lacked a knowledge of Hebrew, early Christians living in the first few centuries after Christ had no option other than using the LXX, but now that we have access to greater knowledge of the Hebrew and access to translations that take into account the fuller revelation of the NT, there is no reason for the church to return to the LXX. Such a position, however, should not minimize the importance of the LXX, for as Gentry remarks, “Genuine textual variants should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and one should not prefer *a priori* either the LXX or the MT.”⁴⁷ While the text of the MT should be preferred on the basis of the arguments above, when there are differences between the MT and LXX that *point to a different Hebrew text* (this is what Gentry means by *genuine* textual variants), one must evaluate whether the textual source used by the LXX might not preserve a better rendering than the MT. Such a stance generally privileges the MT as a witness *in Hebrew* to the original *Hebrew* but allows the carefully weighed text of the LXX to contribute to our understanding of the original Hebrew text.

Septuagint and the Apocrypha

Another challenge faced by evangelicals is the presence of the Apocrypha in many of the manuscripts containing the LXX. Even the language of the LXX evidences the challenge, for some use LXX to refer only to the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek, while others include the Apocryphal additions in defining the term. All the significant uncial manuscripts (e.g., Aleph, A, B, and C) contain portions of the Apocrypha, and some scholars have concluded that their presence indicates an “Alexandrian Canon,” which differs from the standard canon of 39 Old Testament books recognized by modern evangelicals.⁴⁸

Evangelicals are clearly concerned about the extent of the canon, for if the Scripture is the basis for faith and practice, the limits of the canon are of vital importance. Nevertheless, it is not clear that the inclusion of Apocryphal works indicated the acceptance of those books into the canon. First, the variation of additions to the LXX text in the major uncials evidences that there was no fixed “Alexandrian Canon,” for if so, one would naturally expect each uncial to contain the same Apocryphal texts.⁴⁹ Second, Everett Harrison brings to our attention that “Philo

Company, 1892), 3:516.

Further, Emanuel Tov asks whether the Alexandrian Jews were capable of knowing the meaning of the text they were translating, further suggesting that some of the translation decisions of the LXX betray an ignorance of the actual meaning of the Hebrew (“Did The Septuagint Translators Always Understand Their Hebrew Text?” in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 217).

⁴⁷Gentry, “Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament,” 197.

⁴⁸Glenny offers a concise summary of the arguments proposed by those who believe both that the LXX’s canon included the Apocrypha and that the modern church should use this alternative canon (“Septuagint and Biblical Theology,” 266–69).

⁴⁹Porter notes, “Most scholars do not now believe there ever was an Alexandrian

(25 B.C. to 50 A.D.), who was from Alexandria where the LXX was first translated makes no quotations from the Apocrypha; and he gives not the slightest ground for the supposition that the Jews of Alexandria, in his time, were disposed to accept any of the books of the Apocrypha in their Canon of Holy Scripture.⁵⁰

Jobes believes that one of the major arguments for embracing the LXX canon is built on an illegitimate cultural transfer. In our day, the inclusion of books with the covers of the Bible suggests equal authority, but how can we know that this is what was meant by the addition of Apocryphal works in one collection in antiquity?⁵¹ Of course Jobes's argument works best for the additional books (e.g., I and II Maccabees), but it is less persuasive for the *additions to* Esther and Daniel. Peter Gentry's illustration helps here. He compares the ancient manuscripts to Bibles in a modern Christian bookstore. These Bibles include a variety of back matter (maps, introductions, explanatory essays, etc.) that might be interesting to the reader, but is not thereby considered Scripture. He asks whether future archaeologists digging through the remains of a Christian bookstore might not make some of the same mistakes current scholars make about the Apocryphal books.⁵² While Gentry's analogy may be criticized (as most analogies can), it does serve to highlight that the inclusion of books or extra material in a scroll or bound tome does not indicate the extra material is considered of the same authority as the rest of the material in the scroll/bound tome.

While we cannot trace the history of the Old Testament canon from its Jewish roots into modern evangelical expression, we should note that even if it were proved that *some* Alexandrian Jews believed *some* Apocryphal works were of equal authority with the rest of the Old Testament, the issue of canon is larger than what any one individual or group believes about it.⁵³ In sum, the inclusion of Apocryphal works in the LXX witnesses does not demand the acceptance of those texts into a biblical canon.

HOW CAN THE LXX AID EVANGELICAL BIBLICAL STUDIES?

Having traced the history of the LXX and spoken to the reserve some evangelicals may have in using the text, we can now turn to a discussion of five major ways the LXX is presently useful to evangelicals.

canon" ("Septuagint/Greek Old Testament," 1100).

⁵⁰See also his arguments from Josephus's writings ("Importance of the Septuagint for Biblical Studies [Part 1]," 374).

⁵¹Jobes, "Septuagint as Scripture in the Early Church," 39.

⁵²Gentry, "Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament," 217.

⁵³For a more detailed analysis see Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

Text-Critical Use

When asked what the LXX can provide for evangelicals today, many would primarily recognize its potential for textual criticism of the MT. This use is appropriate in light of three factors. First, the Hebrew text was not fixed until early in the Christian era. Thus, the LXX, which was translated centuries before, provides some level of evidence for the Hebrew text used by the translators. Indeed, Gentry reminds us that “the Septuagint remains in many cases the earliest witness to the text of the OT and therefore of immense significance and value.”⁵⁴ Second, the manuscripts discovered in the Dead Sea region verify that some early Hebrew texts match the renderings in the LXX better than the MT (though many of the Hebrew manuscripts align with the MT).⁵⁵ Third, there are readings in the LXX that appear superior to the renderings in the MT.

Only two examples of the superiority of a LXX reading over the MT reading will be examined because of the limitation of space. First, in 2 Samuel 6:5 the MT indicates that the musicians were playing with “fir trees,” but the LXX reads “tuned instruments.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) renders this “fir wood instruments,” seeking to make the best of the Hebrew. But since the reading of the MT can be explained by metathesis (switching of letters) in the original Hebrew, it is preferable to see this as a case where the LXX preserves the original text.⁵⁶

A second example derives from Genesis 4:8, where the MT reading is preserved in the text of the ESV, “Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field...” In a footnote, the ESV indicates that the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch read “Cain spoke to Abel his brother, *‘Let us go out to the field.’* And when they were in the field...” While the MT reading is possible, the LXX reading is preferable not only because the text flows more naturally, but also because a corruption of the Hebrew text is easily explainable as a haplographic error, where an early copier accidentally skipped over that series of words because the Hebrew word for field is repeated.⁵⁷

Both of the examples used above have been challenged as to whether the LXX actually presents a better rendering. This shows that using the LXX as a corrective to the Hebrew of the MT is not a simple task.

⁵⁴Gentry, “Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament,” 194.

⁵⁵Harrison, “Importance of the Septuagint for Biblical Studies (Part 1),” 352.

⁵⁶Peters, “Why Study the Septuagint?” 179.

⁵⁷It could be argued, however, that the MT is the correct reading and the LXX and other witnesses reflect an early *addition* to the text to make it more comprehensible. There is even a suggestion that the Hebrew word normally translated here as “spoke” should instead be translated as “despised.” If so, there is no awkward transition; instead, the text reads smoothly as “And Cain *despised* his brother Abel. And it came to pass, when they were in the field.” See Albert Ehrman, “What Did Cain Say to Abel?” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 53 (1962): 164–67.

Peter Gentry's article, "The Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament," walks through the associated difficulties, concluding that such use is possible if the "foundational principles" of using a "version as a witness to a parent text" are consistently applied—something "current discussions frequently reveal...are forgotten."⁵⁸

Lexical and Grammatical Use

The language of the NT is significantly impacted by the use of the LXX in the early church. This impact occurs both because the texts Jesus, the apostles, and the early prophets chose to cite from are Septuagintal, but also because evidence suggests that the LXX would have been the best-known text in that day. If, when seeking to understand the use of a Greek word or grammatical structure, one only turns to classical and Hellenistic Greek, he or she has missed a massively influential source of information on the way terms are used and understood in the Greek OT Scriptures. As Harrison notes, "The student of Scripture cannot afford to be indifferent to the Semitic influence which has flowed into the Greek of the New Testament by way of the Septuagint, and must learn to examine New Testament concepts in the light both of their Greek and Hebrew provenance."⁵⁹

For the sake of space, we can give only one example.⁶⁰ In classic Greek, ἀδελφός referred to a literal, blood-related brother. The LXX broadens the range of meaning, allowing for it to refer to one's neighbor and, even more specifically, to one who is of the same nation. The NT's use of this word plays off the LXX additions to the range of meaning. In the NT, the church, as a new nation (1 Pet. 2:9–10), embraces this term for its members. Despite blood relationships, ultimately believers are brothers/sisters in Christ, for it is in him that one's true identity is found as a new people.

Commentary Use

A third way evangelicals may find the LXX useful is by recognizing it as an early commentary on Scripture. Peters rightly notes that "to the extent that every translation is a commentary, [the LXX] is the earliest commentary on the Hebrew Bible."⁶¹ As noted above, translations cannot avoid some element of interpretation even if they seek to be literal in rendering. Therefore, the LXX provides access (though admittedly veiled) into the religious thought of those doing the translation. Of

⁵⁸Gentry, "Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament," 194.

⁵⁹Everett Falconer Harrison, "The Importance of the Septuagint for Biblical Studies: The Influence of the Septuagint on the New Testament Vocabulary (Part 2)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 113 (January 1956): 45.

⁶⁰This example is adapted from Harrison, where he provides three more examples (*ibid.*, 35–45).

⁶¹Peters, "Why Study the Septuagint?" 179.

course, difficulty arises from the variety of translators and the multiplicity of recensions. It remains a possibility that a Jewish or Christian reader modified the text of the LXX in light of his own theological purposes, preventing access to the original LXX and thwarting a proper understanding of the commentary provided from it.

Despite the above problems, the critical editions of the LXX (particularly Göttingen's) give hope of being able to recover the original. As such, these texts help modern students of Scripture gain insight into the religious thought-life of the intertestamental period, which impacts NT studies. One of the favorite passages of NT authors is what is sometimes called the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 53. We noted above that the Hebrew lacks sacrificial terminology, but the LXX authors imported such terminology into the context. By doing so, they gave us a glimpse into their interpretation of the passage. While there are still questions concerning the full import of the language (e.g., did the translators have a suffering Messiah in mind?), the inclusion of sacrificial terminology did impact the way readers during the NT period read the text.

Another notable example that has been debated throughout church history is the use of *παρθένος* in the LXX of Isaiah 7:14. Did the original translators choose this word to emphasize *virgin* more than young woman (as the Hebrew term, *הַזֵּיפָה*, implied)?⁶² If the translators meant more than a young woman (as their word choice appears to imply), this provides evidence that the intertestamental readers of the OT may have recognized a messianic prophecy here. Whatever one determines about the intended meaning of the translators, what is clear is that Matthew utilized the LXX's rendering in referencing the *virginal* conception of Jesus (Matt. 1:23)—and this points forward to the next use of the LXX we will consider.

Old Testament Citation Use

It can be disturbing for some evangelical readers when they realize the OT prophecy cited in the NT (from the LXX) substantially differs from the OT text they have in the same Bible (translated from the MT). For example, if one reads Matthew 1:23 in the Revised Standard Version, it says, "Behold, a *virgin* shall conceive and bear a son," but Isaiah 7:14 in the RSV reads, "Behold, a *young woman* shall conceive and bear a son." The RSV sought to accurately communicate the Hebrew in the OT and the Greek in the NT, and what is lost is the Greek OT, which is the text Matthew is citing. Even in 1900, it was recognized by H. B. Swete that the LXX "was the principal source from which the writers of the NT derived their OT quotations."⁶³

⁶²BDAG indicates *παρθένος* refers to "one who has never engaged in sexual intercourse, virgin, chaste person" (777); HALOT indicates that *הַזֵּיפָה*, refers to a "marriageable girl" or a "young woman" (2:835–36).

⁶³Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek: The Contents of the Alexandrian Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Earl Ellis, in his research on Paul's use of the Old Testament, showed that of Paul's ninety-three quotations, fifty-one are clearly from the LXX, four are clearly from the MT, and the other thirty-eight times Paul follows no textual tradition still extant.⁶⁴ A few important points can be derived from Ellis's work. First, the thirty-eight divergences are not equally spread throughout Paul's OT citations; instead, "All quotations from Kings, Job, Jeremiah and Hosea differ from the LXX, as do about half of those from Isaiah and Deuteronomy." On the other hand, quotations from Genesis and Psalms are very consistent with the LXX.⁶⁵ It is quite possible that the divergences in these specific works derive from Paul's use of a LXX text that is no longer extant. Longenecker likewise indicates that some of Jesus's citations appear to "differ from all known Old Testament versions, whether Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic."⁶⁶ Second, Paul clearly preferred the LXX. Considering that Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews (Phil 3:5) and a student of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), it is highly unlikely that he did not know Hebrew. His preference for the LXX is thus noteworthy.

Third, Ellis notes that Paul uses the LXX twenty-two times when it disagrees with the Hebrew,⁶⁷ and this demands some consideration. If Paul knew the Hebrew and Greek, why would he choose to use the LXX rendering instead of the Hebrew? But this question is not for Paul alone, for other NT writers do the same. An example of Jesus's use of the LXX where it differs from the MT comes from Mark 7:6–7, where Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13.⁶⁸ The LXX in the New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) reads, "in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts and teachings."⁶⁹ The MT reads, "and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men." By quoting the former Jesus emphasizes the futility of the religious leader's hypocritical worship as well as the fact that the religious leaders taught their own doctrines as commandments, and these points perfectly fit the context which concerns criticism of Jesus's disciples for not washing before eating. Had Jesus quoted the MT, the central emphasis—that the religious leaders were making their *own standards* the law—would have been missed.⁷⁰

An example in Paul's writing comes from Romans 15:10, where Paul cites Deuteronomy 32:43. The LXX reads, "Be glad, O nations,

1900), 392.

⁶⁴E. Earl Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 12.

⁶⁵Ibid., 12, n. 6.

⁶⁶Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 46.

⁶⁷Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 12.

⁶⁸This example is adapted from Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 45–46.

⁶⁹New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

⁷⁰This example is adapted from Peters, "Why Study the Septuagint?" 180.

with his people” (NETS—emphasis added), whereas the MT reads, “Rejoice, you nations, *concerning His people*” (HCSB—emphasis added). Paul’s use of this text in Romans resides within a series of five citations all supporting the idea that Christ came to fulfill the covenant with Abraham “in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (15:9). Clearly, if Paul had used the Hebrew, this verse would not support his point, but the LXX rendering perfectly reinforced it.

Perhaps the most cited Old Testament quote that depends on a unique rendering in the LXX is the citation of Amos 9:11,12 in Acts 15:16, 17. James, as a leader in the Jerusalem church, was publicly responding to the report on Paul and Barnabas’s successful Gentile mission. He argued that God was working among the Gentiles, calling out a people for his name. In support, James referenced the LXX rendering of Amos 9:11, 12: “On that day I will raise up the tent of David...in order that those remaining of humans and all the nations upon whom my name has been called might seek out me” (NETS). The Hebrew, however, is not as explicit, and therefore less useful to James’s speech: “In that day I will raise up the booth of David...that they may possess the remnant of and all the nations who are called by my name.”

When an OT citation *clearly* differs from the Hebrew rendering, commentators turn to the Greek text, asking whether the author was using the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew in the citation. Karen Jobes warns, however, that this is not enough. What if the Hebrew rendering and the LXX rendering of the verse under question are substantially similar, yet the *broader context* is different? In these cases, commentators may miss the author’s point, since the commentator did not pursue the broader context of the LXX.⁷¹ Jobes concludes, “Exegesis is methodologically flawed if the context of the Hebrew is assumed but in fact it was the Greek OT that was in the NT author’s mind.”⁷² Jobes, in her commentary on 1 Peter, sought to develop the OT quotations from the perspective of the quote *within the LXX*, and she found places where the broader LXX context made an interpretive difference in 1 Peter.⁷³

Before concluding this section, we should mention a question that might be on the mind of the reader. Does a New Testament author’s use of the LXX when it differs from the MT rendering create difficulties from an evangelical perspective? Of course, one could simply conclude that anytime a NT author cites from the LXX, the LXX’s rendering is shown to be original and the Hebrew corrupt. But such an escape appears too easy and frequently fails to consider the full weight of evidence. It may be that the LXX renderings are original, but that ought to

⁷¹Jobes, “When God Spoke Greek,” 235.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); idem, “‘O Taste and See’: Septuagint Psalm 33 in 1 Peter,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 18 (September 2015): 241–51.

be shown rather than assumed. In light of the difficulties, evangelical work needs to be done on many of these texts. Ed Glenny provides a helpful illustration of an evangelical LXX scholar who has sought to navigate these difficult waters. In his article, “The Septuagint and Apostolic Hermeneutics: Amos 9 in Acts 15,” Glenny seeks to prove that “the detailed exegetical work reflected in the scriptural quotation in Acts 15:16–18 reflects the use of the Hebrew Bible, the text of which was important for the Apostolic Decree and the connection with Isa 45:20–21, as well as the LXX, which was the nucleus of the quotation and center around which most of the exegesis apparently took place.”⁷⁴ By arguing that the LXX rendering was related to (and developed from) the Hebrew rendering, Glenny seeks to show that there is no contradiction between the OT text and its use in its Greek translation. Instead, the LXX was more of an interpretation of the Hebrew, and since the interpretation was accurate, it was found to be useful in the early church.

Despite the problems the use of the LXX brings to the New Testament evangelical interpreter, the LXX also provides solutions to other difficulties. Jobs notes that “the Septuagint may provide the answer to some of the charges that the NT writers use their quotations out of context, if exegetes are looking to the context of the Hebrew text when in fact the NT writer was assuming the context of the Greek OT.”⁷⁵ Further, by examining why a NT author incorporated the LXX rendering instead of the Hebrew rendering (where the author is presumed to know the Hebrew rendering), we get a glimpse into the import of the OT passage.⁷⁶ This is not to say that every difference between the MT and LXX is an interpretive translation; rather, when there is reason to believe the MT is not corrupt and there is a way of seeing how the LXX rendering derives from the meaning of the passage, we have reason to suggest the LXX translators sought to bring out the meaning of the text in their translation.

Historical Use

There are two major ways the LXX can aid in understanding history. First, the LXX is without a doubt the OT Bible of the ancient church. Even when the OT text was translated in the early church, it was translated *from the LXX* (e.g., Coptic, Gothic, Syriac, Slavonic, Georgian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, and the Old Latin are all

⁷⁴W. Edward Glenny, “The Septuagint and Apostolic Hermeneutics: Amos 9 in Acts 15,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, no. 1 (2012): 23.

⁷⁵Jobs, “When God Spoke Greek,” 235.

⁷⁶“I contend that Christian biblical theologians should understand theological statements that are unique to the LXX to complement and extend the understanding of the Hebrew Bible, as far as they reflect and repackage the theology found in the Hebrew Bible or as far as that reflected and repackaged theology of the LXX is picked up and used in the NT” (Glenny, “Septuagint and Biblical Theology,” 278).

translations *from the LXX*).⁷⁷ The perspective of the early church, then, was informed by the LXX, not the Hebrew. If we are to make sense of their use and reading of the OT, we must be conversant with the LXX. Most importantly for the history of doctrine, “It was primarily the Greek OT, not the Hebrew, over which the councils deliberated the great doctrines on which our Christian faith rests today.”⁷⁸

Two examples will show the influence of the LXX in early church thought. First, in the Arian Christological controversy, Proverbs 8:22 played a critical role. The OG/LXX reading, “The Lord *created* (ἐκτίσέν) me,” was used by Arians to argue for Jesus’s creaturehood. Much could be said about the controversy, but what is most important to note for our purposes is that the original discussion *did not* center on the *Hebrew* word, but focused on the *LXX translation*.⁷⁹

The second example comes from Augustine, whose widely-cited phrase “I believe that I might understand,” derives from the Old Latin, which is a translation from the LXX. Isaiah 7:9 from the MT is translated, “If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.” In the LXX it is rendered, “And if you do not believe, neither shall you understand” (NETS). The LXX is more of an interpretation than a translation of the Hebrew, but its mark on Augustine and through him the rest of the church is seen in the frequency by which Augustine’s phrase is cited.

In sum, the LXX provides the context of thought from the first to the fourth centuries of the early church. In many places where the Vulgate did not become the standard text, the LXX remained an influence for many more generations. The LXX is even still the official OT of the Greek Orthodox Church. If we are to properly understand religious thought throughout history, then, we must be familiar with the LXX.

A second way the LXX can aid in historical understanding concerns the repetition of events in history. It is often said that one must know history lest its failures are repeated. A robust understanding of the history of the LXX prepares the modern reader for what is frequently called the King James Only Controversy. An increasingly small number of evangelicals embrace the Authorized Version as an *inspired* text.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁷Metzger, “Important Early Translations of the Bible,” 40.

⁷⁸Jobes, “When God Spoke Greek,” 221.

⁷⁹The Vulgate, which was abnormal in the early church in translating from the Hebrew, was written within a generation of the Christological controversy, and it apologetically translated נִיָּן to refer to *possession*, which was later reflected in the AV rendering, “possessed.” While such a translation can be defended, the LXX rendering is not outside the range of meaning for the term (e.g., the Vulgate translated the same verb root in Genesis 14:19 as “created”) (Harrison, “Importance of the Septuagint for Biblical Studies [Part 1],” 350–51).

⁸⁰For a defense of the King James Only movement see, D. A. Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, 3rd ed. (Collingswood, NJ: The Old Paths Publications, 1998); G. A. Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions: An Exhaustive Documentation of the Message, Men & Manuscripts Moving Mankind to the Antichrist’s One World Religion*, 4th ed. (Monroe Falls, OH: Authorized Version Publications, 1993). For criticism of this position see,

history of the LXX shows that such a position is not a historical anomaly.

The Letter of Aristeas is still debated concerning its original purpose. Nevertheless, it is clear that the author intended to make the version authoritative. He did so in three ways. First, by suggesting that it was completed in only 72 days by 72 translators, the author implies God's assistance in the translation. Second, by its invocation of a curse on those who tamper with the text, the reader is reminded of Revelation 22:18–19. Finally, the *Letter* indicates that the Alexandrian Jews accepted the text as *equal* to the Hebrew.⁸¹

What *The Letter of Aristeas* strongly implied, later writers brought to greater clarity. Philo, for instance, indicated the LXX was translated by all 72 translators separately, who when they came together, discovered they all agreed perfectly. He even referred to the translators as “prophets.”⁸² Irenaeus added that Ptolemy, fearing the translators would deliberately conceal elements of their religious writings, isolated each of the translators, commanding them to produce identical translations. According to Irenaeus, the result was that “the Scriptures were acknowledged as truly divine. For all of [the LXX translators] read out the common translation [which they had prepared] in the very same words and the very same names, from beginning to end, so that even the Gentiles present perceived that the Scriptures had been interpreted by the inspiration of God.”⁸³

In the early 5th century A.D., Augustine taught that the LXX was inspired. He believed variance with the Hebrew either indicated the recovery of the original rendering or a new, inspired revelation.⁸⁴ For example, the MT indicates that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days, but the LXX indicated only three days. Which is correct? For Augustine, the Hebrew is historically correct, but the LXX is prophetically correct. Both numbers, 40 and 3, are from the same source, “one being given through the mouth of the prophet Jonah, the other through the prophecy of the seventy translators, and yet both being the utterance of the self-same Spirit.”⁸⁵ How do the two seemingly contradictory

James R. White and Mike Baird, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009); D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

⁸¹Greenspoon, “Septuagint,” 914.

⁸²“They [the LXX translators] like men inspired, prophesied, not one saying one thing and another another, but every one of them employed the self-same nouns and verbs, as if some unseen prompter had suggested all their language to them” (*The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge [London: H. G. Bohn, 1855], 3:82).

⁸³Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.21.2, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, American [C. Scribner's sons, 1905], 1:452).

⁸⁴Jobs, “When God Spoke Greek,” 227.

⁸⁵Augustine, *City of God* 18.44, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin

readings interact? Augustine answers: “They are saying, in effect, ‘In the forty days look for him in whom you will be able to find the three days also. You will discover the former in his ascension, the latter in his resurrection.’”⁸⁶ In sum, “both sources should be employed as authoritative, since both are one, and both are *inspired by God*.”⁸⁷

Jerome fought against Augustine’s position, arguing that “it is one thing to be a prophet, another to be a translator. The former through the Spirit, foretells things to come; the latter must use his learning and facility in speech to translate what he understands.”⁸⁸ Luther, who would influence the translation philosophy of many after him, also believed the LXX to be less than inspired, highlighting the human limitations of the translators: “[They seem] not to have been duly qualified for the magnitude of the work they undertook.”⁸⁹

The controversy over the LXX and its inspiration reflects deeply on modern evangelicalism, for the claim of Septuagintal inspiration frequently arose due to a high view of Scripture. Thus, the LXX provides a helpful historical aid in modern discussion, for it is an imperfect translation approved by God (because quoted by Jesus and the apostles). Thus, while we should expect no perfect English translation of the Scripture (just as there was no perfect Greek translation), we can have confidence that God still works through imperfect representations of the original.⁹⁰

CONCLUSION

Though I agree with Peters that “an exposure to the diverse readings of the Septuagint serves the necessary, though sometimes disquieting, function of shattering simplistic notions concerning the origins of the biblical text,”⁹¹ evangelicals must not shy away from such study. Evangelical faith is an informed faith, and it is a faith that can uniquely contribute to the community of scholarship. And if what I have argued above is correct, then there are plenty of reasons evangelicals should desire to be involved in LXX research.

Porter generalizes that “when compared with scholarly work on the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT, work on the Septuagint has languished

Classics, 2004), 823.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., emphasis added.

⁸⁸Jerome, “Prologue to Genesis,” 3:516.

⁸⁹Martin Luther, *The Creation: A Commentary on the First Five Chapters of Genesis*, 4.7, Luther Still Speaking (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858), 348.

⁹⁰The LXX is unique from modern translations in one important sense; since some of the citations of it are present in the NT, those citations are inspired. Yet, they are not inspired because they are in the LXX; rather, they are inspired because they are in the NT.

⁹¹Peters, “Why Study the Septuagint?” 181.

behind.”⁹² Yet this is, as Edward Glenny has recently said, “a great time to study the Septuagint.”⁹³ The resources available to modern scholars are unparalleled.⁹⁴ In sum, the field is white already to harvest, but there are too few laborers—especially among evangelicals.

⁹²Porter, “Septuagint/Greek Old Testament,” 1105.

⁹³Glenny, “Septuagint and Biblical Theology,” 263.

⁹⁴The Göttingen critical text is almost complete. Jobs and Silva have provided an excellent introductory text (Karen H. Jobs and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005]). There are at least two groups publishing commentaries on the OT from the LXX (Society of Biblical Literature Commentary on the Septuagint and The Septuagint Commentary Series). There are study groups in both SBL and ETS on the Septuagint, and the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies publishes a journal as well as a monograph series.

