"CHRISTIANIZATION" OF THE SEPTUAGINT, A JEWISH LEGACY FROM ALEXANDRIA?

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Abstract:

The Septuagint (hereafter LXX) is generally recognized as a translation that provides textual and theological sources for understanding the New Testament (NT) and the theology of the early church. Yet, as Hengel (2002:19) emphasizes, for many readers or interpreters of Scripture, the study of the LXX remains a *terra incognita* that is in fact crucial for probing the theological and literary context of the New Testament and the early church (Jobes and Silva 2000:23; McLay 2003:137–170). Quotations and implicit allusions from the Old Testament in the NT often display a text that aligns more closely with the LXX than with the Hebrew text. This reality inevitably raises fundamental questions, not only in terms of translation but also interpretation and theology: To what extent did the NT writers and the early church make use of the LXX to support their theological agenda? Given that the LXX was a Jewish translation produced in the diaspora of Alexandria, one must ask: What influence did the use of this source text exert on the theological development of the early church? Has the LXX, in fact, undergone a process of "Christianization"—whether in the sense of being "appropriated" to serve the proclamation of the church or in the sense of being "altered" to support the church's theological agenda? And how did Judaism and Christianity position themselves in the polemics concerning the alleged falsification of Scripture?

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INTRODUCTION

Every translation is, in essence, an interpretation of its sources—not only in the sense of cross-linguistic equivalence but also as a negotiation of interests between the source text, the target text, and the translator. The LXX is no exception. In its case, the translators' attempts at cross-linguistic rendering of the Hebrew text at times involved interpretive decisions that reflect the translators' theological agenda. Among these are renderings that suggest a "Messianic" understanding of their Vorlage, as seen in the following examples (Tov 1999:266; Wevers 1998:406):

LXX	Hebrew Text
ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἢ Γωγ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐξηθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ. *(Seseorang akan keluar dari antara keturunannya dan akan memerintah banyak bangsa, kerajaannya akan ditinggikan mengatasi Gog dan kerajaannya akan ditambahkan).*	יִזַּל־מַ֙יִם֙ מִדָּ֣לְיָ֔ו וְזַרְע֖וֹ בְּמַ֣יִם רַבִּ֑ים מֵאֲגַ֣ג מַלְכּ֔וֹ וְתִנַּשֵּׂ֖א מַלְכֻתֽוֹ׃ (*Air mengalir dari timbanya, dan benihnya mendapat air yang berlimpah ruah Rajanya akan lebih mulia daripada Agag, dan kerajaannya akan ditinggikan).* (Num. *49:7a*)

The LXX offers a markedly different interpretation from the Masoretic Text. In Balaam's oracle, the preceding verse (Num 24:6) depicts Israel as a tree planted by the LORD beside streams of water. This image is continued in 24:7 and connected with the glory of its king, who would surpass Agag. However, the LXX translators projected a messianic hope without preserving the imagery conveyed in the Hebrew text. In this reinterpretation, וזרעו, or a Vorlage similar to the Masoretic Text, is rendered as ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ. It is likely that ἐθνῶν was translated from a Hebrew text reflecting בעמים, which indeed resembles במים in the Masoretic Text. By interpreting Agag as Gog, the translator introduces an eschatological reading frequently associated with Gog, the enemy of God's people in the end times (cf. Ezek 38–39; Rev 20:8).

A similar reinterpretation is also found in the translation of the book of Amos (4:13):

LXX	Masoretic Text
διότι ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στερεῶν βροντὴν καὶ κτίζων πνεῦμα καὶ ἀπαγγέλλων εἰς ἀνθρώπους τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ, ποιῶν ὄρθρον καὶ ὀμίχλην καὶ ἐπιβαίνων ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψη τῆς γῆς· Κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὄνομα αὐτῷ. (*Lihat, Akulah yang memperkuat guruh dan menciptakan angin, serta memaklumkan orang yang diurapi-Nya kepada manusia, menjadikan fajar dan kabut, serta menginjak tempat-tempat tinggi di bumi. Tuhan Allah Yang Maha Kuasa adalah nama-Nya*).	כִּי הִ נֵּה יוֹ צֵר הָרִים ׄ וּבֹ רֵא ׄ רוּחַ ׄ וּמַ גִּיד ל אָ דָ מ ׄ מַ ה־ שֵּׂ חוֹ עֹ שֵׂ ה ׄ שַׁ חַר עֵי פָ ה וְ דֹ רֵ ךְ עַל־בָּ מֳ תֵ י אָ רֶץ יְה ׄ וָה אֱל הֵ י־ צ בָ אוֹת שְׁמֹו׃ (*Sebab, Dialah yang membentuk gunung- gunung dan menciptakan angin, yang memberitahukan kepada manusia apa yang dipikirkan-Nya, yang membuat fajar dan kegelapan dan yang melangkah di atas bukit-bukit bumi; TUHAN, Allah Semesta Alam, itulah nama-Nya*).

The most significant difference between the LXX and the Masoretic Text lies in the interpretation of מהשחו. The LXX renders it as τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ, the usual equivalent for משחו ("his Messiah," "his anointed one"). Although the two are very similar, there is no textual evidence to suggest that the Vorlage of the LXX actually contained משחו. The messianic rendering is more likely the result of the translator's interpretation (Glenny 2009:236–240; Law 2013:97). Within the context of the presence of the Almighty (παντοκράτωρ), the nations will one day seek him (cf. LXX Amos 9:12: οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). Interestingly, elsewhere the LXX translator offers an interpretation that links the vision of the locust swarm with King Gog, one of the very offspring of the locust, who emerges at the end of time (cf. Num 24:7 above).

II

As the Gospel spread from Jerusalem into the Greco-Roman cultural environment, the LXX and the Greek translations of the Hebrew "Old Testament" provided scriptural resources that could be employed for the church's understanding of faith and for its proclamation concerning the identity and work of Jesus of Nazareth. Like the translators of the LXX, the Gospel writers also reinterpreted these texts from a new perspective—often with a christological emphasis—even when such reinterpretations did not correspond to the intention of the Hebrew source text in its historical context. A relevant example is the Gospel of Matthew's quotation of the prophecy about Immanuel (Isa 7:14, cited in Matt 1:23).

Masoretic Text	LXX	Greek
לָכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן וק	διὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν σημεῖον· ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουηλ (Is. 7:14)	Ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ, ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον Μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός (Mat. 1:23)

The text of Isaiah in the LXX and its quotation in the Gospel of Matthew are nearly identical word for word. A slight difference can be observed in the verbs καλέσουσιν ("they will call") and καλέσεις ("you will call"). The third-person form in Matthew appears to be a linguistic adjustment by the evangelist (although there is also a Qumran text that preserves a variant reading: וקרא 1QIsa). The most widely discussed issue is the rendering of ἡ παρθένος as the equivalent of העלמה. In Hebrew, עלמה means "young woman," that is, a woman of marriageable age. Although according to the norms of ancient Israel an unmarried woman was expected to be a virgin, virginity is not the focus of Isaiah's prophecy. In its historical context, the prophecy was directed to King Ahaz (8th century BCE), who was facing the Damascus-Samaria coalition in the Syro-Ephraimite War. Ahaz was reassured through a sign specifically linked to the birth of a son from "the young woman."

The child to be born was not the Messiah, as in later developments where the messianic figure came to be centered on a king who would restore Israel in the future (Brown 1993:147). However, from a christological perspective, the LXX provided a textual basis that supported the interests of the author of the Gospel of Matthew, as indicated by the fulfillment formula ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου (Matt 1:22). T. M. Law notes the existence of a tradition concerning a virgin birth, but the quotation from Scripture lends legitimacy to a messianic interpretation:

> It is possible, indeed quite likely, that Matthew had already known a tradition of the virgin birth of Jesus, but the Gospel writer's argument that this man is the promised Messiah could not have been made without a citation from the Jewish scriptures. It would have been one thing for Matthew to say, "This Jesus was born of a virgin according to an oral tradition," but for him to have had a text from the Jewish scriptures, provided by the Septuagint, meant that he could ground the tradition of the virgin birth in a real prophetic utterance (Law 2013:97).

In the translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion—revisions of the LXX (cf. BHS: 685)—παρθένος was replaced with νεάνις, "young woman," which is semantically closer to עלמה (cf. LXX Exod 2:8). From apologetic writings, including the works of Justin Martyr, we learn that this textual difference later became one of the key points of debate between Jews and Christians (Hengel 2002:31; see further section VI).

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III

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In the book of Acts, we find another example of the use of the LXX to support the theology and mission of the early church. At the Jerusalem council, which sought to bridge the differences between the Jewish-identity church and the newly emerging Gentile churches, James responded by quoting the prophecy of Amos (Amos 9:11-12). The Greek source text he cited shows similarities to the LXX, yet with significant differences when compared to the Masoretic Text, as becomes evident from the following comparison:

LXX	Masoretic Text
(11) τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἀναστήσω τὴν σκηνὴν ∆αυιδ τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς	בַּיֹּום הַהוּא אָקִים אֶת־סֻכַּת דָּוִיד הַנֹּפֶלֶת וְגָדַרְתִּי אֶת־פִּרְצֵיהֶן וַהֲרִסֹתָיו אָקִים וּבְנִיתִיהָ כִּימֵי עֹולָם׃

χστήσω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτὴν καθὼς αἱ ἑραι τοῦ αἰῶνος,	
(12) ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων **καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη**, ἐφ᾽ οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα	לְמַעַן יִירְשׁוּ אֶת־ שְׁאֵרִית אֱדוֹם ו כל־ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִ קָרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם נְאֻם־ יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה זֹּאת: (Prov. 9:11-12)

The most relevant difference in this context lies in verse 12. In the Masoretic Text, the restored booth of David will "possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name" (cf. TB2). In the LXX, however, the word אֱדוֹם ("Edom") was very likely read as אדם ("mankind"), so that Amos's prophecy was understood universally, encompassing the remnant of humankind and all the nations. Yet the purpose of the restoration of David's tent is not the conquest of the nations but rather "that all the nations might seek" the Lord (ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).

Why does the LXX translation differ from the Masoretic Text? On the one hand, some argue (Gelston 2002:498–499) that the LXX translator read יירשו ("they shall possess") as ἐκζητήσωσιν, perhaps because the Vorlage contained ידרשו ("they shall seek"). The difference lies only between the letters י (*yod*) and ד (*dalet*). Yet this proposal runs into difficulty with the use of את as the object marker of the verb יירשו found in the Masoretic Text. On the other hand, some suggest that the LXX translator deliberately read his theological perspective into the source text. One of the main reasons is that the Hebrew text itself contains words that are not at all difficult to understand (Jobes–Silva 2000:195).

> We have, however, there is little reason to posit a different Hebrew *Vorlage* here. Since the Hebrew preserved in the MT is not particularly difficult, we may consider the possibility that the LXX translator—whether or not he made a mistake in reading the Hebrew characters—was primarily motivated by hermeneutical concerns. Elsewhere in the Minor Prophets (Hos. 9:6; Amos 2:10; Obad. 17, 19, 20; Mic. 1:15; Hab. 1:6; Zech. 9:4), the Hebrew verb ירש is represented with κληρονομέω ("to inherit") or one of its cognates, but such a rendering may have appeared to the translator less appropriate here. Possibly inspired by the parallel concept of "all the nations," he in effect harmonized "Edom" to the context, an instance of the part for the whole, that is, one pagan nation representing all nations.

According to Dines (1991:302), the LXX translator of Amos was likely influenced by similar texts such as LXX Zechariah (cf. 8:22: καὶ ἥξουσιν λαοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ ἔθνη πολλὰ ἐκζητῆσαι τὸ πρόσωπον κυρίου παντοκράτορος ἐν Ιερουσαλημ). Moreover, as Bauckham (1996:161) observes, what appears to be a mistranslation in LXX Amos is in fact comparable to alternative interpretations found in the *pesharim* among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

With certain adjustments, the author of Acts appropriated the Greek version of Amos's prophecy as a missiological text. Its wording is nearly verbatim with the LXX. Whereas the LXX does not include the word "Lord," the quotation in Acts 15:17 explicitly inserts it: ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν κύριον. On the basis of this inclusively toned LXX rendering, James emphasized that the Gentiles who turn to God should not be burdened with the requirement of following Jewish traditions and norms.

IV

In addition to quotations that are largely verbatim, textual traces of the LXX can also be observed in the words and expressions employed by the New Testament writers. In Paul's letters, Isaiah's prophecies are quoted 25 times among 83 other Old Testament quotations, yet there are many further echoes of Isaiah that shaped his christological interpretation. One clear example is the use of the Servant Song (Isa 52:12–53:12). Although textual variations exist, the Greek texts cited by Paul generally reflect the Septuagint. Verbatim, the LXX is identical or nearly identical with the following examples:

Isa 52:15 = Rom 15:21: Οἷς οὐκ ἀνηγγέλη περὶ αὐτοῦ ὄψονται, καὶ οἳ οὐκ ἀκηκόασιν συνήσουσιν

Isa 53:1 = Rom 10:16: Κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν;

Beyond verbatim quotations, Paul frequently appropriates ideas or terminology from the LXX and interprets them according to the theological emphases he wishes to highlight. For example, Watson's study (2009:241–248) on the Servant Song (Isa 52:12–53:12) and its relation to the suffering and death of Christ demonstrates that the LXX

was a crucial lexical source for Paul's theology. The Pauline phraseology of Christ dying "for us" can be understood as a reinterpretation of expressions found in LXX Isaiah:

LXX	Masoretic Text
οὗτος τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει καὶ **περὶ ἡμῶν** ὀδυνᾶται, καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐλογισάμεθα αὐτὸν εἶναι ἐν πόνῳ καὶ ἐν πληγῇ καὶ ἐν κακώσει (Is. 53:4)	אָכֵן חֳלָיֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא וּמַכְאֹבֵינוּ סְבָלָם וַאֲנַחְנוּ חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ נָגוּעַ מֻכֵּה אֱלֹהִים וּמְעֻנֶּה

ἔτι γὰρ Χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν ἔτι κατὰ καιρὸν **ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν** (Rm. 5:6) συνίστησιν δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁ θεός, ὅτι ἔτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν Χριστὸς **ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν** (Rm 5:8) τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν **ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν** ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ (2Cor. 5:21).

The prepositions περὶ and ὑπὲρ overlap functionally, as is evident from the following example:

ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν, δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ, θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκί, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι· (1 Ptr. 3:18).

Yet, as Watson (2009:242) emphasizes, "While the Isaianic περὶ ἡμῶν must mean 'for us' or 'for our sake,' Paul's substitution of ὑπὲρ for περὶ makes the vicarious nature of Christ's sufferings still clearer." Similarly, the verb παραδίδωμι, associated with the death of Christ, echoes the use of the same verb in LXX Isaiah 53 (Watson 2009:245–246):

LXX	Masoretic Text
πάντες ὡς πρόβατα ἐπλανήθημεν, ἄνθρωπος τῇ ὁδῷ αὐτοῦ ἐπλανήθη· καὶ κύριος **παρέδωκεν** αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν (Is. 53:6)	כֻּלָּנוּ כַּצֹּאן תָּעִינוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ וַיהוָה הִפְגִּיעַ בּוֹ אֵת עֲוֹן כֻּלָּנוּ:
διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς κληρονομήσει πολλοὺς καὶ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν μεριεῖ σκῦλα, ἀνθ᾽ ὧν **παρεδόθη** εἰς θάνατον ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη· καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν καὶ διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν **παρεδόθη** (Is. 53:12)	לָכֵן אֲחַלֶּק־לוֹ בָרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פֹּשְׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֵטְא־רַבִּים נָשָׂא וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים יַפְגִּיעַ:

In Isaiah 53:6, the Masoretic Text contains the verb פגע in the Hiphil form ("to lay upon, to cause to fall upon"), which is, of course, different from the verb παραδίδωμι ("to hand over"). The LXX translator rendered it as "the Lord handed him over for our sins." In its passive form, the verb παραδίδωμι is used again in 53:12,

though here it translates two different Hebrew verbs: הערה ("to pour out") and יפגיע ("to make intercession, to entreat"). Although יפגיע, derived from פגע in the Hiphil, has another meaning, the translator once again chose παραδίδωμι in its passive form, as in 53:6: "because of their sins he was handed over" (53:12).

Both the active and passive uses of παραδίδωμι, according to Watson, shaped the New Testament usage of παραδίδωμι in relation to the death of Christ:
ὅς γε τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλ᾿ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν χαρίσεται; (Rom 8:32)
ὃς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν καὶ ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν (Rom 4:25).
Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ᾗ **παρεδίδετο** ἔλαβεν ἄρτον (1Kor 11:23).

In his study on the prophetic interpretation of the LXX, F.F. Bruce concludes: "a study of the Septuagint version of the prophets and related scriptures confirms the view that variants are not to be explained solely by the ordinary causes of textual alteration but sometimes reflect new ways of understanding the prophecies in the light of changing events, changing attitudes and changing exegetical methods" (1979:26). In turn, when the early Christians re-read the Jewish heritage from Alexandria, the interpretive decisions and diction already employed by the LXX translators provided a textual reservoir highly relevant for the re-interpretation of Old Testament prophecies in light of the work of Christ.

V

However, it was not only a matter of adopting the vocabulary and ideas available in the LXX. In subsequent developments, we observe what can more explicitly be categorized as the "Christianization" of the LXX, a term proposed by Gilles Dorival (2021). In a series of lectures on the LXX at the University of Oxford (2017–2018), he introduced the notion of "Christianization" not merely in the sense of reinterpreting and utilizing the LXX for the purposes of the early church, but also in the sense of interpolating explicitly "Christian" elements into LXX manuscripts that circulated within ecclesial contexts well into the medieval period.

Dorival notes (2021:79) that among the LXX books, especially Psalms and Isaiah were more prone to being "Christianized," since these two books are the most frequently cited in the New Testament. Textual changes under the influence of New Testament quotations can be observed in varying degrees across LXX manuscripts, ranging from the "very limited" (attested in two or three manuscripts) to the "almost complete" (appearing in all or nearly all manuscripts).

For instance, Psalm 31:6 (LXX 30:6) εἰς χεῖράς σου παραθήσομαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου ("into your hands I will commit my spirit"): several Vetus Latina manuscripts, translated from the LXX, employ the verb *commendo* (from παρατίθημι), echoing Luke 23:46 (εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου).

Likewise, Psalm 69:10 (LXX 68:10) ὅτι ὁ ζῆλος τοῦ οἴκου σου κατέφαγέν με ("zeal for your house has consumed me"): both Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus read καταφάγεταί, reflecting the form found in John 2:17 (Ὁ ζῆλος τοῦ οἴκου σου καταφάγεταί με).

Isaiah 42:4 καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιοῦσιν ("in his name the nations will hope"): Joseph Ziegler, in the Göttingen edition of the LXX, proposed νόμος as a correction for ὄνομα, but all extant manuscripts preserve ὄνομα, in agreement with Matthew 12:21.

Moreover, traces of New Testament influence can be detected in certain LXX manuscripts, including (Dorival 2021:82–90):

Psalm 38:14 (LXX 37:14) ἐγὼ δὲ ὡσεὶ κωφὸς οὐκ ἤκουον ("But I, like a deaf man, did not hear"): Papyrus Lipsiensis 34 and Bodmer 24 read ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκρεμάμην ὑπ' αὐτῶν καὶ ὡσεὶ κῶφος οὐκ ἤκουον ("But I was hanged by them, and like a deaf man, did not hear").

Psalm 51:9 (LXX 50:8) ραντιεῖς με ὑσσώπῳ, καὶ καθαρισθήσομαι ("You will sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed"): Papyrus Lipsiensis 39, Bodmer 24, and one London manuscript read ῥαντιεῖς με ὑσσώπῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ξύλου καὶ καθαρισθήσομαι ("You will sprinkle me with hyssop from the blood of the wood [of the cross], and I shall be cleansed").

Both examples unmistakably reveal the marks of "Christianization" within the LXX manuscript tradition, aligning the Psalms more explicitly with the passion narrative of Christ.

VI

Finally, we should note the stance of the Church Fathers regarding the authenticity of the LXX, particularly in their polemics with the Jews.

Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, an imaginary Jew, accused his opponent of falsifying the Scriptures, as follows:

> Moreover, the prophecy, 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,' was uttered respecting Him. For if He to whom Isaiah referred was not to be begotten of a virgin, of whom did the Holy Spirit declare, "Behold, the Lord Himself shall give us a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son?' For if He also were to be begotten of sexual intercourse, like all other first-born sons, why did God say that He would give a sign which is not common to all the first-born sons? ... But you in these matters venture to pervert the expositions which your elders that were with Ptolemy king of Egypt gave forth, since you assert that the Scripture is not so as they have expounded it, but says, "Behold, the young woman shall conceive," as if great events were to be inferred if a woman should beget from sexual intercourse (Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo 84; lihat Hengel 2002:31-32).

As noted earlier (cf. section II above), the word translated as "young woman" had already been revised into νεᾶνις. In line with Justin Martyr, the Church Father John Chrysostom, in his homilies on the Gospel of Matthew, rejected the Jewish revision of Isaiah 7:14. For him, the replacement of παρθένος with νεᾶνις constituted a denial of Mary's virginity (Dorival 2021:109).

Elsewhere in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (79), Justin Martyr accused the Jews of having manipulated the text of Scripture. Referring to Psalm 96:10 (LXX 95:10), he maintained that the original text read: εἴπατε ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν· ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου ("say among the nations, 'the Lord reigns from the tree [of the cross]'"). According to him, the Jews had removed ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου, since such passages confirmed the messianic identity of Jesus.

In the mid-third century, Origen, in his letter to Africanus (*Epistula ad Africanum* 14), reiterated Justin's accusation that the Jews had altered the text of Scripture. One example, he claimed, was the omission of the story of Susanna and the Jewish elders, because it contained accusations against their own leaders. A similar stance was

expressed by Theodoret in the fourth century, who firmly believed that the LXX was divinely inspired just as much as its Hebrew source. For these Church Fathers, the LXX represented the unchanged Hebrew text; hence, there was no reason to rely on the Hebrew source. Likewise, revisions of the LXX were to be rejected, as they merely reflected alterations introduced in accordance with Jewish interests (Dorival 2021:109).

CONCLUSION

The foregoing survey demonstrates the vulnerability of questions of interpretation and textual authenticity in the formulation and affirmation of the identity of a community whose faith rests upon sacred texts. A long journey has been required to arrive at a critical awareness of the historical dimension underlying the formation of Scripture. Even today, both textual research and hermeneutical inquiry continue to remind us of the dynamic life of the texts that have been handed down from generation to generation of believers. This vitality is not only due to various unintentional errors but also to the fact that the process of textual transmission can never be entirely value-free. It must be acknowledged that what we are able to attain is nothing more than an approximation of the ancient sources available to us, while at the same time honoring the diversity of "traditional" texts—understood as those transmitted from one generation to the next—that have served as authoritative for communities of faith.

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