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**DEBATES OVER THE PLACE OF
THE SEPTUAGINT IN THE
ORTHODOX TRADITION**

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In polemics of Orthodox theologians with Jews, Protestants and Catholics, the Septuagint has often been regarded as the hallmark of Orthodoxy. However, throughout the history of the Orthodox tradition violent polemics against allegedly corrupted Hebrew Bible existed side by side with the usage of the same Hebrew Bible text in commentaries and translations. The Orthodox theology of today has to reckon with the fact of textual pluralism in the transmission and translation of the Bible.

A more in-depth study of the complicated history of the Septuagint in its relationship with the Hebrew Bible is to be found in the monograph «Introduction to the Septuagint. Bible on the crossroads of Hebrew and Greek traditions» by the present author (to appear in 2022 in Russian).²

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Introduction

The term Septuagint commonly refers to the corpus of religious literature that was created in the Jewish-Hellenistic setting from the 3 Century BCE onward and later entered the Christian tradition as the first part (the Old Testament) of the Christian Bible. It consists of translations of the books of the Hebrew Bible into Greek as well as of some additional texts that were treated as authoritative in the Jewish-Hellenistic and Early Christian milieux. The destruction of important Jewish-Hellenistic communities (including the Alexandrian Jewish community) during the war with Rome in 115-117 CE as well as profound changes that occurred in Judaism in the first centuries CE put an end to the flourishing of the Jewish-Hellenistic tradition. Its legacy was transmitted by Christian scribes.

From the very beginning of the Greek-speaking Christianity, the Greek translation of the Bible became the sacred text of the Christian communities. Starting from the middle of the 2 century CE the differences between the Septuagint and the received text of the Hebrew Bible (the so-called Masoretic text) started playing an important role in the polemics between the Christians and the Jews. In the Byzantine Christianity the Septuagint was treated as the uncorrupted Word of God, as opposed to the Masoretic text allegedly corrupted by the Jews. Later on, the Septuagint started being regarded as the hallmark of Orthodoxy not only in polemics of Orthodox theologians with Jews, but also with Protestants and Catholics.

The research of the present author traces the debates over the place of the Septuagint in the Orthodox Tradition from the 2 century CE up till now.

Early Christianity and Early Middle Ages

Justin the Martyr, in his “Dialogue with Trypho” (71, 72) was the first to accuse Jews for having deliberately corrupted the messianic passages of the Old Testament (especially Is 7:14). Since then, this became a standard topic with the Greek Church Fathers. Of course, the Hebrew text, as it had been received by the prophets, was regarded as inspired (at least theoretically, since, with few exceptions, the Fathers did not know Hebrew). The LXX was seen as the faithful reproduction of this inspired text, while the Greek texts used by Jews in their polemics with

Christians – as corrupted³. Gallagher, in his studies of the patristic biblical theory⁴ came to the conclusion that the early Fathers (before Origen) tended to ascribe the corruption to the authors of the Greek revisions. Only later, after Origen introduced the Hebrew text into Hexapla and showed that it was the basis of the revisions, the blame for the corruption was moved from the authors of the Greek revisions to the Hebrew scribes themselves.

The notion of inspiration of the LXX, that we encounter already in Philo, became extremely popular in patristic thought⁵. It was God’s inspiration that had allowed the Seventy interpreters to produce a faithful rendering of the inspired Hebrew original.

On this background it looks rather unexpected that when Origen attempted to “heal” the LXX manuscript tradition, he used to this end the Hebrew text and the Hebraizing revisions. (though, somehow contradictory, in *Epistula ad Africanum* he regards the idea that Christians should reject the copies in use in the Churches, and substitute them with those of the Jews as absurd). In the Hexapla and in the “healed” version of the LXX, Origen marked “pluses” and “minuses” of the LXX vis-à-vis the Hebrew text, corrected the proper names against the Hebrew and sometimes changed the word order to make it closer to that of the Hebrew⁶. However, the interest the great theologian of the Greek Church had for the Hebrew text and Hebraizing revisions of the LXX was obviously shared by those later scribes who copied the Hexapla material either in the body or on the margins of their manuscripts, as well as by those exegetes who used this material in commentaries. It seems, however, that the condemnation of Origen’s teaching at the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553 CE) – though it had nothing to do with his work on the text of the Old Testament – led to diminishing the interest in his Hexapla, at least within the Byzantine Church.

3 See Adler, W. *The Jews as Falsifiers : Charges of Tendentious Emendations in Anti-Jewish Christian Polemics* / W. Adler // *Translations of Scripture : Proceedings of a Conference at the Annenberg Research Institute, May 15–16, 1989*. Philadelphia : Annenberg Research Institute, 1990. P. 1–27.; Skarsaune, O. *The Question of Old Testament Canon and Text in the Early Greek Church* / O. Skarsaune // *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament : The history of its interpretation* / ed. M. Sæbø. Vol. 1 : *From the beginnings to the Middle Ages (until 1300)*. Pt. 1 : *Antiquity*. Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996. P. 443–450.

4 Gallagher, E. L. *Hebrew Scripture in Patristic Biblical Theory : Canon, Language, Text* / E. L. Gallagher. Leiden : Brill, 2012. P. 177–178, 191–192.

5 See, e.g., Benoit, P. “La Septante est-elle inspirée?” / P. Benoit // *Vom Wort des Lebens : Festschrift für Max Meinertz zur Vollendung des 70. Lebensjahres* 19. Dezember 1950 / hrsg. N. Adler. Münster : Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951. P. 41–49., reprinted in: Benoit, P. *Exégèse et théologie : [en 4 tomes]* / P. Benoit. Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1961–1982. T. 1. 1961. P. 3–12.; Benoit, P. *L’inspiration des Septante d’après les Peres* / P. Benoit // *L’homme devant Dieu : Mélanges offerts au père Henri de Lubac* : [en 3 tomes]. Paris : Aubier, 1963–1964. T. 1 : *Exégèse et patristique*. 1963. P. 169–187.; Auvray, P. *Comment se pose le problème de l’inspiration des Septante* / P. Auvray // *Revue Biblique*. 1952. Vol. 59. No. 3. P. 321–336.

6 Kamesar, A. *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible : A Study of the “Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim”* / A. Kamesar. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1993. P. 10–12.

It is noteworthy that Origen commented on both the passages under asterisk and obelos (one can call this “exegetical maximalism”⁷), as though they had the same value for the Bible exegesis. Not only with Origen, but with other Church Fathers as well we meet commentaries where non-LXX material is used to elucidate a particular OT passage. Let us adduce two examples, from Fathers whose authority is especially great in the Orthodox world.

It is well known that in Gen 1:9 the LXX contains words “And the water which was under the heavens gathered itself unto one place and the dry land was seen”, which are absent from the Hebrew. St. Basil, commenting on these words, notes that “some of the other translators” (i.e. non-LXX) leave them out and that these words seem to be absent from the Hebrew text. Moreover, he adds that these LXX words “are superfluous” and “in accurate copies” (i.e. in the post-Hexaplaric manuscripts) they are marked with an obelus, “which is the sign of rejection” (Hexaemeron, 4, 5)⁸.

St. John Chrysostom used the revisions (most probably, known to him through the Hexapla) in his commentary on Psalms. For example, commenting on Psalm 8:3 (LXX: ἐνεκα τῶν ἐχθρῶν σου “because of your foes”), he adds “Another translator, describing these enemies more exactly, has διὰ τοὺς ἐνδεσμοῦντάς σε, for they bound Him as He was led to the Cross”. The reading διὰ τοὺς ἐνδεσμοῦντάς σε, according to the Syro-Hexapla, belongs to Aquila⁹. Chrysostom not just quotes this reading, but treats it as more exact than the LXX!¹⁰

In general, it seems, the Greek Fathers’ attitude towards the non-LXX text of the Old Testament was based not on text-critical, but on pedagogical and pastoral considerations. If a particular reading contradicted the dogma (e.g., Is 7:14 in the revisions), it was to be rejected. If it might prove useful for the preaching (e.g. Psalm 8:3 in Aquila’s version), it might be worth quoting and commenting.

Very rarely before Jerome would a Christian exegete admit that the LXX had deliberately changed the Hebrew original. Sometimes Origen seems to say that the LXX changed the wording

7 The term suggested in Kamesar, A. Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible : A Study of the “Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim” / A. Kamesar. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1993. P. 18.

8 This example is taken from St. Filaret’s Memorandum *On Dogmatic Value and Conservative Usage of the Greek Septuagint and Slavonic translations of the Holy Scripture* (Филарет (Дроздов), митр. Московский. О догматическом достоинстве и охранительном употреблении греческого семидесяти толковников и славенского переводов Священного Писания / митр. Московский Филарет (Дроздов) // Прибавления к изданию творений Святых Отцев, в русском переводе. Часть XVII. Москва : Типография В. Готье, 1858. С. 452–484).

9 Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt; sive Veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta. Post Flaminium Nobilium, Drusium, et Montefalconium, adhibita etiam versione Syro-hexaplarum. Vol. 2 / ed., emend. F. Field. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1875. P. 96.

10 The example is taken from Chase F. H. Chrysostom, a Study in the History of Biblical Interpretation / F. H. Chase. Cambridge : Deighton, Bell and Co. ; London : George Bell and sons, 1887. P. 33. Other examples of Chrysostom’s usage of the Hebrew text and the Hexapla, see pp. 28-34.

of the original¹¹. For example, Kamesar¹² cites Origen's commentary on the Psalms (Ps 2:1-2, 42:3), where Origen notices that the Hebrew "future" tense is rendered with the Greek past and suggests that the translators rendered prophecies related to Christ as something already accomplished because God, in His Omniscience, knows everything from the beginning. Once again, the point of view here is not that of a textual critic, but that of a preacher: difference between the Greek and the Hebrew texts provides a good occasion to edify the listener, reminding him of God's omniscience.

Augustine, in *De Civitate Dei* attempted to combine the traditional understanding of the LXX as inspired with the evidence of discrepancies between the LXX and the *Hebraica Veritas*, abundantly provided by the Vulgate. Having retold the legend of the LXX, he states (*De Civitate Dei* 18, 43): "The same Spirit who was in the prophets when they spoke these things was also in the seventy men when they translated them, so that assuredly they could also say something else, just as if the prophet himself had said both, because it would be the same Spirit who said both". He investigates (*De Civitate Dei* 18, 44) a test case of Jona 3:4, where the prophet predicts to the Ninevites that their city shall be overthrown - in forty days according to the Hebrew text, but in three days according to the LXX. Despite his belief in the inspiration of the LXX, Augustin writes: "If I am asked which of these Jonah may have said, I rather think what is read in the Hebrew: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown"". However, continues Augustine, if one raises himself above the history, then *both* Greek and Hebrew texts tell the truth. Nineveh, according to Augustine, prophetically represents the Church of the Gentiles, the "three days" of the LXX – Christ's resurrection three days after the Crucifixion, the "forty days" of the Hebrew text – Christ's ascension forty days after the Resurrection.

This conception of the new inspiration of the Seventy, which put them on par with the ancient Biblical prophets themselves and gave them right them to modify the original, was necessary for Augustine to account for the differences between the LXX and the Hebrew, which Jerome's Vulgate had brought to light. Greek Fathers did not face such a problem, so for them the essence of the inspiration of the Seventy was exactly the fidelity of the LXX towards the original. Augustine's "double inspiration" conception was not relevant for the Orthodox world until Modern times, when some Orthodox Churches, especially in diaspora, found themselves in the same situation as Augustine centuries ago, namely in the situation of co-existence of several Bible versions some of which are based on the MT and some on the LXX.

11 Gallagher, E. L. *Hebrew Scripture in Patristic Biblical Theory : Canon, Language, Text* / E. L. Gallagher. Leiden : Brill, 2012. P. 183–188.

12 Kamesar, A. *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible : A Study of the "Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesisim"* / A. Kamesar. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1993. P. 14.

From the rise of the Vulgate to the beginning of the Bible translations into modern Languages

By the 9th century the Vulgate had become the standard Bible of the Catholic Church. The schism between the Greek-speaking Byzantine Church and the Latin-speaking Western Church, which was evident already in the days of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople (858-867, 877-886), and became formal and lasting since 1054, was to add a new dimension to the rivalry between the LXX and Vulgate. However, it took long time before Orthodox polemicists included the *Hebraica Veritas* of the Vulgate in the list of the Catholics' sins.

Photius, for example, authored a series of vehement anti-Latin treatises, which laid the foundations for later anti-Catholic polemics in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. He accused Latin Christians of a lot of deviations from what was the norm for the Byzantine Christians (fast on Saturday, beginning the Lent on Wednesday, celibacy of the priests, adding "Filioque" to the Creed etc.). On this background it is noteworthy that the Vulgate with its "Hebraica Veritas" was not included in this list of "deviations". After all, the dogmatically important passages (e.g. Is 7:14) were rendered in the Vulgate in the same way as in the LXX, while other passages were evidently not so important for the polemicist.

Even four centuries after the schism, Gennady of Novgorod, upon whose initiative the first full Slavonic Bible was compiled, did not hesitate to take the Vulgate as a model and even to translate some OT books from the Vulgate (see above).

It appears that the first outright Orthodox attack on the "Jewish" textual basis of Vulgate was provoked by a Western attack on the *Letter of Aristeas*. In an extensive commentary on Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, published in Basel in 1522, Luis Vives (Joannes Ludovicus de Vives) cast doubts on the authenticity of the *Letter of Aristeas*. De Vives's commentary was heavily criticized by Maksim (ca. 1475–1556), a learned monk of Greek origin and unusual biography. As a youth, he studied Greek and Latin in Italy, where he was deeply impressed by the Dominican friar Girolamo Savanarola. Later he became a monk at Mt. Athos from where he was sent to Russia to translate spiritual literature. He was proclaimed a saint in 1988. In a pamphlet entitled "Against Ioannes Ludovicus," written in Church Slavonic, Maksim criticized Vives's "aberrations," among which was his negative attitude towards the LXX. This criticism turned into a full-scale denunciation of Jerome and Catholics, who - Maksim claimed - had neglected the LXX and turned to the Scriptures of the "deicidal Jews"¹³.

¹³ Сочинения преподобного Максима Грека, изданные при Казанской Духовной Академии : в 3 ч. Казань : Типография губернского правления, 1859–1862. Ч. 3. 1862. С. 203–226.

In the end of 17th and beginning of 18th century there was a confrontation in Russia between, on the one hand, theological circles inspired by the Kiev academy and following the patterns of Catholic (Latin) scholarship and, on the other hand, the philellenist movement led by Likhud Brothers (two Greek monks who founded and managed the “Slavic Greek Latin Academy” in Moscow from 1685 to 1694). The polemics on the value of the LXX resumed with new force. The most important monument of this polemics was anonymous “Refutation of the Denigrators of the Holy Translation of the Bible made from Hebrew to Hellenic dialect by the Divinely Wise, Filled with Holy Spirit and Wisdom LXXII Interpreters”, which traced the differences between Orthodoxy and “Catholic aberrations” to the differences between the LXX and the Vulgate, translated from the “corrupt” Jewish text. The main thrust of the polemics was not so much against the Jews, as against the Catholics.

After the appearance of the MT-based Protestant translations, the LXX has become a symbol of Orthodoxy in its struggle on three fronts: against Jews, against Catholics, and against Protestants. The polemics become especially bitter when the Orthodox churches are confronted with foreign missionary activity or when new Bible translations are launched.

Debates over the place of the Septuagint in the Orthodox Tradition and the Bible translation into Modern Greek

Vernacular Greek paraphrases of the Bible (especially of the Psalter) started already in the sixteenth century. Christian paraphrases of the OT books were based on the LXX. It seems that the translations of the Bible into vernacular Greek by Greek-speaking Jews (witnessed, e.g., by the Constantinople Penteteuch of 1547, started earlier, but they had no influence on the Christian tradition (it is interesting that in the Mediaeval Eastern Europe (Litva and Russia) the relationship between Jewish and Christian translation traditions was significantly different, see below).

The first large-scale paraphrase of some parts of the Old and New Testament into vernacular Greek, based on an Italian work of this kind, was published in Venice in 1536 by Ioannikios Kartanos ¹⁴. A translation of Psalter into vernacular Greek, made by Agapios of Crete

¹⁴ Reprinted in Καρτάνος, Ι. Ἡ Παλαιά τε καὶ Νέα Διαθήκη, ἥτοι τὸ ἄνθος καὶ ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῆς / Ι. Καρτάνος ; επιμ. Ε. Κακουλίδη-Πάνου. Θεσσαλονίκη : Κέντρο Ελληνικῆς Γλώσσας, 2000. 619 σελ. On the work and polemics it caused see also Livianos, D. “In the beginning was the word”. Orthodoxy and Bible translation into Modern Greek (16th–19th centuries) / D. Livianos // Mediterranean Chronicle. 2014. Vol. 4. P. 101–120.

and based on the LXX, was published in 1543, also in Venice¹⁵. Such paraphrases (mainly of the Psalter) became numerous in 17-19 centuries¹⁶

A new stage in the history of Bible translation into modern Greek began with the initiatives of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1810 the BFBS published a reprint of Maximos Kallipolites' modern Greek translation of the New Testament, which had been made almost two centuries before, but still remained the only New Testament translation available in the vernacular Greek (first printed in 1638 in Geneva, with the approval and support of Patriarch Kyrillos Loukaris, later reprinted with some modifications in 1703 in London, and in 1710 in Halle).¹⁷

Around 1820, the BFBS commissioned a new Bible translation from Hilarion, archimandrite of Sinai and later metropolitan of Tirnovo. Hilarion translated both the New and the Old Testament, but his work was found by the BFBS too different from the BFBS standards. His translation of the NT was published (with significant editorial changes) in 1827. In 1828 his translation of the Psalter (from the LXX), together with the text of the LXX Psalter was also published in London. However soon after this the BFBS took the decision to reject Hilarion's translations because they did not comply with the BFBS guidelines, for example, Hilarion followed the LXX and not the Hebrew original. This decision proved to be fatal: the rejection of the LXX by the BFBS made almost all Greek Orthodox clergy opponents of the Bible Society.

The new BFBS project of Bible translation into modern Greek was accomplished by Neophytos Vamvas (Νεόφυτος Βάμββας; 1770–1856), an Orthodox archimandrite, professor of philosophy (later dean) of the Athenian University, and one of the very few Greek Orthodox clerics who shared the translation principles of the BFBS, including the superiority of the Masoretic Text. Between 1831 and 1851, Vamvas translated and published the Psalter (from the Masoretic text; 1831), Gospels and Acts (1838), the whole OT (the books of the Hebrew canon, 1840), the NT (1844), and finally the whole Bible, namely the books of the Hebrew canon (translated directly

15 See Fernández Marcos, N. *The Septuagint in Context : Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible* / N. Fernández Marcos. Leiden : Boston : Köln : Brill, 2000. P. 180, note 31.

16 Delicostopoulos, A. *Major Greek Translations of the Bible* / A. Delicostopoulos // *The Interpretation of the Bible : The International Symposium in Slovenia* / ed. J. Krašovec. Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1998. P. 311–313.

17 On the history of the Modern Greek Bible translations see Vapouris, N. M. *Translating the Scripture into Modern Greek* / N. M. Vapouris. Brookline, Mass. : Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994. xv, 258 p.; Delicostopoulos, A. *Major Greek Translations of the Bible* / A. Delicostopoulos // *The Interpretation of the Bible : The International Symposium in Slovenia* / ed. J. Krašovec. Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1998. P. 297–316. (*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament : Supplement Series* ; 289); Livianos, D. "In the beginning was the word". *Orthodoxy and Bible translation into Modern Greek (16th–19th centuries)* / D. Livianos // *Mediterranean Chronicle*. 2014. Vol. 4. P. 101–120.

from Hebrew) and the NT. All these publications, whether printed in Athens or in London, were BFBS publications.

Vamvas's translation was immediately condemned by Church officials. The Holy Synod of the Church of Greece disapproved of it between 1834–1836 in several letters and declarations. As a reaction to Vamvas's translation, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople issued an encyclical condemning any translation of the Bible into vernacular Greek (1836). Constantinos Oikonomos (1780–1857), an eminent Greek Orthodox scholar and theologian, wrote a four-volume treatise in defense of the LXX¹⁸. Nevertheless, since 1851, Vamvas's translation has been republished many times by the Bible Societies, first by BFBS, later by the Hellenic Bible Society (Ελληνική Βιβλική Εταιρία), established in 1992. It is used almost exclusively by the Greek Protestant community.

In 1997 a translation of the whole Bible into the modern vernacular (*dimotiki*), commonly called “Today's Greek Version”, was published by the Hellenic Bible Society¹⁹ (the New Testament had been published separately earlier, in 1985). The textual basis for the books of the Hebrew canon was the MT, while the deuterocanonical books were translated from the LXX. Though the Orthodox version of Today's Greek Version is published with the letter of approval of the Church authorities, this letter states that this translation can be used for studying the truth revealed by God, but “it cannot replace in the liturgical and general use in our Holy Orthodox Church the translation of the Seventy” (μή δυναμένην ὅμως ἀντικαταστήσαι τήν ἐν λειτουργικῇ καί γενικωτέρα χρήσει παρά τῇ Ἁγίᾳ ἡμῶν Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ μετάφρασιν τῶν Ἑβδομήκοντα).

Debates over the place of the Septuagint in the Orthodox Tradition and the Bible translation into Modern Russian

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russian literary language established itself as a linguistic entity different from Old Slavonic, with a flourishing body of literature. In 1815, the Russian Bible Society (1814–1826) launched a project of Bible translation into Russian. But because of opposition from the more conservative part of the Orthodox clergy, the Bible Society was closed in 1826 and the whole print run of the new Russian Pentateuch was burnt. After several decades of debates, the translation project was resumed in 1858 and finished in 1876.

¹⁸ Dafni, E. G. Konstantinos Oikonomos ex Oikonomon als Septuaginta-Interpret / E. G. Dafni // Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007 / ed. A. Lemaire. Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2010. P. 265–292.

¹⁹ Η Αγία Γραφή (Παλαιά και Καινή Διαθήκη). Μετάφραση από τα πρωτότυπα κείμενα. Αθήνα : Ελληνική Βιβλική Εταιρία, 1997.

Published under the aegis of the Holy Synod, the Russian Bible is commonly called the Synodal Bible. It was (and still is) authorized for private reading only, not for liturgical use.²⁰

Following the example of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Russian Bible Society used the MT as the base text for the Synodal Old Testament, a decision that received much criticism and created conflict within the Church. Among the main champions of the MT was St. Filaret Drozdov, the metropolitan of Moscow (1782–1867), who supported the Russian translation with his spiritual authority.

The translation of the Bible into Modern Russian also sparked a spirited controversy among Russian theologians and Biblical scholars. In 1845 saint Filaret Drozdov, the metropolitan of Moscow (1782–1867), wrote a memorandum entitled *On the Dogmatic Value and Conservative Usage of the Greek Septuagint and Slavonic Translations of the Holy Scripture*²¹. Contrary to the title, the memorandum seeks to defend *both* the LXX tradition (reflected in the Church Slavonic version as well) and the MT. First, St. Filaret mounts a series of arguments in favor of LXX readings. For example, he argues that the LXX is a “mirror of the Hebrew text as it was two hundred years or more before Christ,” and that “in the Orthodox teaching of Holy Scripture it is necessary to attribute a dogmatic merit to the Translation of the Seventy, in some cases placing it on an equal level with the original and even elevating it above the Hebrew text.”. However, next he makes a series of arguments in favor of the MT readings (e.g., the quotations from Hos. 11:1 in Mt. 2:15 and Isa. 42:1 in Mt. 12:18, references to Church Fathers’ usage of the Hebrew text, etc.). The arguments St. Filaret adduced in favor of the LXX had been often cited in the earlier Orthodox literature before, but his array of arguments in favor of the MT was unprecedented in the Orthodox tradition. In fact, the memorandum served as a theoretical basis for the strategy of the Russian Bible translation, championed by St. Filaret and his followers: to translate the OT from the Hebrew, yet taking into account the LXX, especially in dogmatically important passages.

The opposition to the new Russian Bible translation and, especially, the MT as its textual base continued even after it had the blessing of the Holy Synod and became the Synodal Bible. Saint Feofan (Govorov), a well-known Russian ascetic writer, wrote a series of articles against the new translation. In these articles he stated that the LXX had always been the Bible of the Orthodox

20 An extensive study of the Bible translation in the 19th century Russia (with references to earlier literature) is Batalden, S. K. *Russian Bible Wars : Modern Scriptural Translation and Cultural Authority* / S. K. Batalden. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013. viii, 389 p.

21 Филарет (Дроздов), митр. Московский. О догматическом достоинстве и охранительном употреблении греческого семидесяти толковников и славенского переводов Священного Писания / митр. Московский Филарет (Дроздов) // Прибавления к изданию творений Святых Отцев, в русском переводе. Часть XVII. Москва : Типография В. Готье, 1858. С. 452–484.

Church, while the MT, according to the Church Fathers, had been corrupted by the Jews. Feofan knew the work of Oikonomos on the LXX and referred to it.

In one of these articles, trying to come to terms with the fact that the new translation has the blessing of the Holy Synod, Feofan suggested that it can be used alongside with the Church Slavonic Bible in the same way in which the Fathers used other translations alongside with the LXX, namely as an additional means for understanding difficult places in the Bible. (In private correspondence, however, he was more open, expressing a hope that this “modernist Bible” would be burned in the main square of the Russian capital, and a wish that the translators be compelled to assist in this auto-da-fe²²). In another private letter he shares with the addressee his desire to translate the LXX into Russian with a commentary, whose aim would be “to vindicate the Greek text and to condemn the Hebrew”.²³ Though Feofan did not undertake this project, later there have been several attempts to translate the LXX or its parts into Russian.

It was in the context of these discussions around the Synodal Bible that the LXX scholarship in Russia began. In 1870-ies P. Gorsky-Platonov (Moscow Spiritual Academy) and I. Yakimov (St. Peterburg Spiritual Academy) gave, in several articles, a scholarly response to the assaults of St. Feofan (Govorov) on the Synodal translation. The first big research work on the LXX in Russia was a thesis on the LXX of Jeremiah defended in 1874 by I. Yakimov. Studying the differences between the MT and the LXX he was in favor of priority of the MT. In his speech at the defense of his thesis Yakimov even suggested to revise the Church Slavonic text (!) in order to make it closer to the MT. In 1875 N. Eleonsky published an extensive paper “Sources on history of the LXX translation and the degree of their credibility”, showing the pseudepigraphical nature of the Letter of Aristeas. The culmination of the 19-th century Russian scholarship on the LXX was the first (and by the moment only) full-fledged scholarly introduction to the LXX, published in 1897 by I. Korsunsky (Moscow Spiritual Academy).

The Synodal translation was heavily criticized for its eclectic nature, both by those in favor of the LXX and by those in favor of the MT. Several alternative translations from the LXX have been offered²⁴.

²² Творения иже во святых отца нашего Феофана Затворника. Собрание писем : в 8 вып. [Печоры] : Свято-Успенский Псково-Печерский монастырь ; Москва : Паломник, 1994. Вып. 7–8. С. 131. (Вып. 7. Письмо 1138).

²³ Творения иже во святых отца нашего Феофана Затворника. Собрание писем : в 8 вып. [Печоры] : Свято-Успенский Псково-Печерский монастырь ; Москва : Паломник, 1994. Вып. 7–8. С. 81. (Вып. 7. Письмо 1097).

²⁴ Порфирий (Успенский), еп. Образцы русского перевода священных книг Ветхого Завета с греческого перевода 72 толковников / еп. Порфирий (Успенский) // Труды Киевской Духовной Академии. 1869. № 2. С. 1–36; № 5. С. 71–101; № 6 С. 103–118; № 7. С. 119–143; № 8. С. 145–170; № 9. С. 171–200; № 10. С. 203–214. Psalter by Porfiry (Uspensky) was published posthumously in 1893: Псалтирь в русском переводе с греческого епископа Порфирия. Санкт-Петербург : Синодальная типография, 1893. 242 с. In 1909–1917 P. Yungorov, professor of Kazan Spiritual Academy, also published his

Russian and Greek situations: a comparison

In many regards, archimandrite Vamvas's work with the BFBS on the Modern Greek translation may be compared with the work of the Russian Bible Society, and its most outstanding member, archimandrite (later metropolitan) Filaret Drozdov (1782–1867), on the Russian Synodal Bible published in 1876. In both cases, new translations were initiated by the agents of the BFBS but carried out by local Orthodox clergymen. In both cases, the translations came under heavy attack from two angles: first, because of use of vernacular instead of traditional Church language, and second, because of the Hebrew text used as the basis for the OT translation. The different fate of the two translation projects—the ultimate success of the Russian Synodal Bible and the rejection of its Greek counterpart by the Greek Orthodox—is probably to be explained by the very special position the LXX occupies in Greek culture and in the Greek Church. As Delicostopoulos²⁵ has put it, “the Greek nation has the rare privilege of having as its mother tongue the language of the New Testament as well as of the Septuagint (LXX).” Within Greek culture, the Greek NT and the Greek LXX are not perceived as mere versions of the Bible, but rather *The Bible*, connected in a unique way to the Greek language and Greek history. Any move to replace them with a modern translation risks being perceived as an attempt to deprive the national culture of this unique possession.

The Synodal Bible created in Russia a completely new situation: a predominantly LXX-based text used in liturgy and a predominantly MT-based text authorized for private reading. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, all the official and semi-official documents of the Russian Church, as well as almost all theological literature quoted the Bible in Church Slavonic version only. Starting from the middle of the twentieth century all such quotations follow the Synodal Bible.

The position of the Greek Orthodox Church towards “Today's Greek Version” is somehow reminiscent of that of the Russian Orthodox Church towards the Synodal version: in both cases the liturgical text belongs to the LXX tradition and is archaic in language, while the modern language MT-based translation is authorized for private usage only. However, the sphere of usage assigned to the Today's Greek Version is significantly narrower (at least for the time being).

translations of Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, the Minor Prophets, the Psalter, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and the beginning of Genesis.

²⁵ Delicostopoulos, A. Major Greek Translations of the Bible / A. Delicostopoulos // The Interpretation of the Bible : The International Symposium in Slovenia / ed. J. Krašovec. Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1998. P. 297.

Other Orthodox Bible translations oscillate between the Russian Synodal model (MT as the main base text with some respect for the LXX) and the LXX-only model²⁶.

Debates over the Place of the Septuagint in the Orthodox Tradition.

Current situation

Differently from medieval Greek Fathers, modern Orthodox theologians must face the problem of numerous differences between the LXX and modern MT-based Bible translations. It is not possible to ascribe all of these differences to the supposed “corruption” of the MT. Sometimes conservative Orthodox theologians follow the option suggested by Augustine after he had become aware of the differences between the LXX and the *Hebraica Veritas* of the Vulgate: “Orthodox believe that the changes in the LXX were made under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are to be accepted as part of God’s continuing revelation”²⁷.

After the Qumran discoveries, Orthodox proponents of the “Septuagint-only” ideology announced that the Dead Sea scrolls have shown the priority of the LXX text over the MT, an idea that has become quite popular in the Orthodox milieu. In Russia, sometimes one can hear appeals to reject the Synodal Bible because of its “Jewish” textual base (MT). An extreme case is represented by a project to translate the OT back into Hebrew: “The Jews have translated the Bible into the languages of the nations in order to influence them; the world is indebted to them, and it’s time to pay them back by giving them the true original Hebrew text of the Old Testament” – namely the Old Testament translated into Hebrew from the 1756 Edition of the Church Slavonic Bible²⁸.

On the other hand, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in Greek, Russian, and Romanian theology and Bible scholarship, one can see developments towards recognizing textual pluralism as an inherent feature of the Orthodox approach to the Bible. Miltiades Konstantinou, one of the main participants in the Hellenic Bible Society project translating the LXX into Modern Greek, states that “the Orthodox Church ... must recognize as her own heritage both texts, the Hebrew and the Septuagint, encouraging their study and research”.²⁹ The same attitude has been

²⁶ Mihăilă, A. The Septuagint and the Masoretic Text in the Orthodox Church(es) / A. Mihăilă // *Review of Ecumenical Studies* Sibiu. 2018. No. 1 (10). P. 30–60.

²⁷ Ware, T. *The Orthodox Church* / T. Ware. Harmondsworth : Penguin books, 1963. P. 208.

²⁸ Shamir, I. A. *Translating the Bible into Hebrew : A Talk at Rhodes Conference, 8–12 October 2009* / I. A. Shamir. URL: http://www.israelshamir.net/English/Bible_to_Hebrew.htm (дата обращения: 14.10.2021).

²⁹ Konstantinou, M. *Bible translation and national identity: the Greek case* / M. Konstantinou // *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*. 2012. Vol. 12. Issue 2. P. 53.

suggested by the author of the present paper.³⁰ The Romanian Biblical scholar Mihăilă formulates this in a rather aphoristic way: “The slogan for Orthodox biblical studies should be ... ‘back to Hexapla,’ not ‘back to the Septuagint.’”³¹

The Hexapla analogy is not to be taken as an indication that the duality of the LXX and MT should be treated as a purely textual phenomenon, like the difference between two codices. There are important theological and ecclesiological aspects behind this duality. From the theological point of view, this duality is rooted in the double nature of the Old Testament of the Christian canon. On the one hand it is the text stemming from ancient Israel and Judah, from the world of the Ancient Near East; it is pre-Christian and pre-Hellenistic. On the other hand, it is a part of the Bible of the Christian Church from the beginning of the Common Era. There is a diachronic dimension within the Bible itself that comes into play.

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³⁰ Селезнев, М. Г. Еврейский текст Библии и Септуагинта: два оригинала, два перевода? / М. Г. Селезнев // XVIII Ежегодная богословская конференция Православного Свято-Тихоновского гуманитарного университета : материалы : в 2 т. М. : Православный Свято-Тихоновский гуманитарный университет, 2008. Т. 1. С. 56–61.

³¹ Mihăilă, A. The Septuagint and the Masoretic Text in the Orthodox Church(es) / A. Mihăilă // Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu. 2018. No. 1 (10). P. 33.