

## FOREWORD

When the first edition of this work, published in 1979, ran out it seemed like a good opportunity to prepare a second edition, revised and brought up to date. Every field of biblical research, but particularly the history of the biblical text, has undergone profound changes over the last twenty years as a result of the new information provided by the documents from Qumran. In addition, recent studies on the Septuagint as a literary work have helped to give vital stimulus to study of the Greek versions of the Bible.

The title of this book expresses the main concern that, as a selective criterion, has been my guide during the course of its production. I am aware that the Septuagint is not a translation but a “collection of translations”, but I also think that an introduction of this kind should include other translations of the Bible into Greek – some better known, others preserved only as fragments – whose authors turned to the Hebrew text with more or less success but with the firm resolve of transmitting the original better than their predecessors. This activity of correcting and improving the first version of the Bible, the Septuagint, began the day after the translation, as can be conjectured judging by the Jewish papyri we have, and went on until the Byzantine era. We can even extend this process to the publication of the trilingual Pentateuch of Constantinople in 1547. The special history of the text of the Greek Bible, which culminated in the production of Origen’s Hexapla, precludes separating these two sources of a single channel of transmission.

It is mandatory to mention here two classics in this area of research: H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (revised by R. R. Ottley, Cambridge 1914), which is a mine of information and assimilated knowledge, indispensable even today as a reference work, although, of course, obsolete in many respects; and S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford 1968), produced to complement and update the previous work. To these must be added the recent publication by the French specialist scholars M. Harl, G. Dorival and O. Munnich, *La Bible grecque des Septante: Du judaïsme hellénistique au christianisme ancien* (Paris 1988). These three works are present in this *Introduction*. Hence it often refers to them for information and

aspects of research which they include, whereas I am more expansive in those chapters that include either recent achievements or the questions most discussed in recent years. A mere glance at the list of contents is enough to give some idea of the new topics or those points which, while not completely new, are tackled from a different perspective.

Nor should there any need to say that this *Introduction* claims to be selective rather than exhaustive. It does not treat systematically such important topics as the language of the Septuagint, the manuscripts, the papyri and the principal editions of the Greek Bible, the problems peculiar to each book or the history of research on the Septuagint. Most of these points are studied extensively in the introductions by Swete, Jellicoe or Harl *et al.* mentioned above. On the other hand, the specialised bibliographies by S. P. Brock, Ch. T. Fritsch, S. Jellicoe, *A Classified Bibliography of the Septuagint* (Leiden 1973), and C. Dogniez, *Bibliography of the Septuagint: Bibliographie de la Septante 1970-1993* (Leiden 1995), can be used for guidance on most of these topics (I will refer to these two works respectively as CB and Dogniez *BS* throughout this volume). However, in the last chapter I have inserted a short guide to the secondary versions, some of which, like the Old Latin or the Coptic versions, are of primary importance for restoring the Old Greek.

I could also have tackled in a more systematic way such significant topics as the translation techniques of the various books, the manuscript illustrations, or the Greek Bible and information technology. However, it was necessary to circumscribe in some way the frame of reference of this *Introduction* in order to keep to a logical plan and to remain within reasonable limits, particularly with regard to the length of the book. Instead, space has been given to material that, in my opinion, has so far not been properly discussed, such as the double texts of the Greek Bible and Targumism, the Jewish versions into mediaeval and modern Greek, and several chapters in section IV such as those on other revisions, biblical quotations, the commentaries, and the *catenae*. Also, I have considered it useful to include two new chapters in this second edition, one on the Septuagint and the Hebrew text and other on the Septuagint and early Christian literature, in view of the special attention given to these topics in recent publications.

To conclude, I hope that this modest contribution to the study of the Greek text of the Bible will be useful not only to a small and

select group of Septuagintalists but also to biblical scholars in general, philologists and historians of antiquity, and for all those interested in this important cultural legacy.

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