

Faulty Translations? The Debate About Greek Translations of Scripture

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Abstract

To better understand the nature of scholarly controversy about Greek translations of Scripture, this essay begins by placing it within the context of important background concerns such as the absence of original biblical manuscripts, the large number of Greek translations, the professional specialties of biblical scholars, the translation of linguistic features across different languages, the personal disposition of scholars towards Scripture – among many other important considerations. The essay then proceeds to identify, discuss, and critically evaluate a core set of fiery issues dominant within the scholarly literature. The central controversies surrounding each of these contentious issues are discussed and evaluated: the divine inspiration of Scripture, the comparative relevance of English translations, the cosmological paradigms applied by biblical scholars, and intentional corruption by Greek translators – among others. The essay suggests that many of these controversies contain largely erroneous claims generated by biblical scholars themselves arguably to advance academic status and prestige, with the inevitable effect of systematically deflating Scriptural authority over time.

Keywords: divine inspiration; Greek translation; biblical scholars; translators; cosmological paradigm; biblical inerrancy; Old and New Testaments; biblical manuscripts.

Preliminary Remarks

Surely, evaluating and assessing some of the key issues involved in the controversies and debates about the Greek translation of Scripture is not a propitious position to be in for several reasons.¹ Beyond the central fact that we don't have the original biblical written manuscripts, any critical evaluation is bound to attract the ire of those who might for a variety of professional or personal reasons either favor or disagree with one particular Greek translation over another or even disapprove of any Greek translation at all. Clearly, not everyone can be pleased in this sort of linguistic debate.

Further, looked at from a historical point of view, there have been so many different Greek translations with different dialects and accents, some of them gaining more authority than others over time, that it becomes nearly impossible to critically assess them. One Greek translation becomes the basis for another Greek translation becomes the basis for yet another one such that, inevitably, what we are dealing with is assessing copies of copies of copies, not original manuscript text.

So, then, to a large extent personal preferences and degree of professional knowledge become deciding factors in the evaluation and assessment process. Still, genuine inquiry and logical evaluation should not be prevented from moving forward

¹ The Greek text-translation controversy refers to various criticisms of the critical Greek manuscripts as the foundational translational documents of the New Testament that has been occurring up-to-date for the last 120 years or so. Although it began with a critical viewpoint of the doctrines of biblical inerrancy, divine inspiration, and divine preservation, it has mushroomed into claims regarding many other types of problems thought to characterize biblical texts. In fact, so many criticisms have been made over this wide expanse of time that it is virtually impossible to address them comprehensively within the present context. Consequently, many key topics will need to be temporarily overlooked here and taken up at a later time in order to be able to meaningfully address some major themes and issues (Burton, 2002, 1998b (1896); Harris, 1882; Westcott and Hort, 2003 (1881); Turner, 1955; Metzger, 1968a; Parry, 1976; Williams, 1982; Wallace, 1991, 1995; Comfort, 2003; Swanson, 2005; White, 2009; Holmes, 2018).

due to ideological, philosophical, or religious predispositions held prior to critical analysis of the core issues involved in the Greek text-translation debate.

The research shows that many professional theologians and religion scholars don't find any problem with Greek translations of the New Testament, while many others do. Many others prefer English translations for accuracy of meaning, while still others prefer it in their own language. For example, the German Bible Society prefers German translators proficient in Greek rather than other translators since they possess the linguistic expertise.

One thing is certain. If you wrestle with the central issues of the Greek text-translation debate solely from within the confines of particular religious perspectives or even agnostic or atheistic viewpoints, then one Greek translation will be favored over another Greek translation of the New Testament whether or not it is more accurate than another. A great deal of objectivity is lost to personal preference and ideological leanings. Perhaps the proper approach to take in a critical evaluation of Greek translations of New Testament texts is to try to maintain as much as possible a steadfast objective rational-logical disposition that seeks truthful judgments.

However, legitimate criticisms should not only respect the available evidence, but also respectfully honor the divinely inspired words contained in Scripture. So, then, the scholar's predisposition towards Scripture prior to analysis needs to be seriously taken into account. From a strict biblical point of view, it's arguably difficult for secular scholars to claim the ethical high ground of a respectful disposition towards the Gospels when they are busy extracting Scriptural texts out of their organic contextual flow of meaning and dissecting them into bits and pieces of specialized minutiae and continually scoured for problematics.

The last points to mention here briefly in terms of preliminary concerns before engaging in critical commentaries on Greek translations of New Testament text are indeed crucial considerations given the contemporary times in which we live. One issue refers to the manuscripts that were used to translate different parts of the Bible. A number of scholars have argued that no two manuscripts in any language perfectly agree with each other no matter what their historical source.

No two Greek manuscripts among literally hundreds are exactly the same, and the same claim applies to Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic manuscripts. These manuscripts have been passed down through the ages largely through a hand-written transmission process all the way up to the invention of the printing process in the early 16th century which itself caused a host of new interpretative, translational, and transmissional problems. Therefore, it would be wise for scholars to adopt Beazley's (2019) contention that there is no 'perfect' Greek translation; essentially, it is a veritable myth or fallacy.

This consideration alone should cause scholars to exert abundant pause before rushing to any firm conclusions about textual meaning within the New Testament especially and Scripture as a whole. But another perhaps more fundamental issue from a scholarly point of view is how Scriptural text itself may be perceived or conceived prior to reading and evaluation, as mentioned above. The scholar's view of the text itself prior to analysis and exegesis can be expected to exert profound influence over the interpretative and hermeneutical processes.

For example, if the actual text of the New Testament and Scripture in general is viewed as the inerrant Word of God, that conception creates a wholly different interpretative posture towards the text than, say, if it is viewed as divinely inspired but subject to human error nonetheless. It goes without saying how these conceptions may possibly operate to influence the process of translation of textual meaning as well as the process of critical evaluation and assessment of the Greek text -

translation debate itself. In other words, when the biblical text in question is viewed as the Word of God, it tends to be viewed as containing no errors, inconsistencies, or other problems, at least among certain fundamentalist and evangelical adherents.

Last but not least important are the more fundamental problems that characterize all translations in general and Bible translations in particular when the script of one language is being converted to the script of another language. Linguistic features which are neither commonly nor greatly problematic within one language become key issues of difficulty when converting them to another language. Simple language characteristics like word order, word choice, rare words, highly-abstract terms or phrases, idioms and other word-play expressions, gender words, and even punctuation become highly problematic, not to mention language features such as poetry. How do you translate the poetry of one language script into the poetry of another, for example?

When you add to this mix the habits, judgments, blunders, biases, and preferences of translators themselves whether solitary or as a committee, then it becomes easy to understand why Bible translations have always been marred by persistent problems, “several of them virtually impossible to resolve” (Metzger, 1993b). And it almost goes without saying, logically speaking, the more radically different these two linguistic scripts are from each other, the greater the range and type of problems that will be confronted. When the crucial factors of historical period and varying interpretative modes are considered, these translational problems tend to be irremediably compounded, perhaps even unbridgeable in many important respects.

Introduction

To be sure, all of these lengthy preliminary remarks and concerns informing or infusing any critical evaluation and assessment of this debate effectively restrict the parameters of

the present essay. It should be admitted from the start that all core controversial issues and dominant themes characterizing the pertinent scholarly research cannot be fully listed and comprehensively reviewed in such a brief exercise.² Nevertheless, a select few of the significant fiery issues ignited by this literature can be confidently identified, reviewed and critically evaluated to some degree.

Accordingly, then, we will deal with the following set of issues: the divine inspiration of Scripture, the comparative relevance of English translations, the cosmological paradigm commonly applied by biblical scholars, the claim that Greek translations have been intentionally corrupted, and questions arising from the process of copying manuscripts and from references to passages from the Old Testament within the New Testament. These are all central issues in the Greek text-translation controversy repeated throughout the research literature that need to be addressed here.

Divine Inspiration

In the scholarly literature, certain conceptual themes have been introduced into exegeses about the Greek text of Scripture especially the New Testament, of course, and they need to be addressed here directly. The first issue that needs to be dealt with is the dominant theme of the divine inspiration of Scripture. In the research literature, the scholars who make the claim about biblical text being the sacred, inerrant, or divine Word of God typically refer to certain passages in the Bible to this particular view.

However, this claim is typically used to advance yet another related claim that the translation of biblical manuscripts was

² This is very unfortunate since many of these issues are still hotly debated to this day such as, for example, the problems characterizing Erasmus's Greek translation from the Latin Vulgate (The 'Textus Receptus' or TR) and how this influenced the creation of other 'Bibles' (de Jonge, 1986, 1980; Bentley, 2012), as well as the constant but unfounded claims that the King James Bible is the only error-free Bible in existence (Lewis, 1991).

‘perfect’ or without error, including Greek translations. Usually, the reference was to Hebrew 4: 12, Revelation 19: 13, 2 Timothy 3: 16, and 2 Peter 1: 19-21. Let’s just look at the Timothy and Peter passages below:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for...” (2 Tim 3: 16)

“So, we have the prophetic word made more sure. But know this first of all, no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Pet 1: 19-21)

Perhaps there is little debate among biblical scholars about what Paul means in Timothy or what Peter means exactly. The verses immediately preceding the verse in question for Paul emphasizes that the “sacred writings” are an important part of acquiring the wisdom needed to obtain salvation. Gaining ‘wisdom’ is a significant part of reaching salvation, fully in line with Old Testament views as expressed in the wisdom literature and the prophets.

Then he goes on to make the stupendous claim in his own inimical style that all Scripture is the ‘breath’ of God, employing a powerful breathing metaphor to describe Scripture itself. Obviously, at that time there was really no ‘New Testament’ to speak of, so it’s clear Paul was referring to Scripture as his own Jewish Bible or the ‘Old’ Testament. In other words, Paul fully accepted the belief that the Jewish Bible had been given by God, and that principle applied to all the writers of the New Testament as well. There is nothing in his writings that would suggest he viewed Scripture in any other way, and this explains why he would describe it in such life-conveying terms.

Human beings were the writers that put down the words according to their own personal styles, experiences, and

perspectives, but the information itself came from a divine source, not a human one. The Greek language makes this fairly clear by using the word ‘theopneustos’, which literally translates to ‘breathed by God’ or ‘God-breathed’. The Greek root word here is ‘pneo’, meaning breath, wind, spirit. Therefore, it was concluded all Scripture is ‘perfect’ (Psalm 19: 7; 119/Matt 5: 48).

All this having been said about divine inspiration of the Word of God supported by real, concrete biblical passages in a variety of places across both the Old and New Testaments, it must be stressed here it is perhaps most likely that such passages referred to the original writing itself and not the subsequent revisions, re-writings, and multiple copying of all biblical texts and documents. There seems to be nothing in these passages or elsewhere in the Scripture to indicate that the divine-inspiration principle also applies to the process of translation, nor to the translators themselves, for that matter (Lovik, 1996; Metzger, 1993a).

The application of the biblical principle of ‘God-breathed’ Scripture to the translating process itself or to translators or to the copying of manuscripts would seem to be an illegitimate application of this principle. From a biblical and theological point of view, it would not seem to make much sense to apply the principle of divine inspiration to Greek or even English manuscripts nor to any copied biblical manuscripts.

Even evangelicals of various stripes who most often make the ‘divine inspiration’ claim about Scripture need to remember better the translation history of the English Bible they usually refer to, namely the 1611 King James Version (KJV). At that time, the Apocrypha was sandwiched between the Old and New Testaments, although no longer the case (Wright, 2010; McGrath, 2002; Lewis, 1991). The Apocrypha was part of the authorized Bible back then, and this historical fact impacts upon any unqualified claims about the divine inspiration of Scripture.

The other core controversial issue with the biblical inerrancy debate in Bible translations especially translations of Byzantine or Greek New Testament manuscripts is that it is often employed as a weapon by contemporary secular biblical scholars to assail the divine authority of the Bible itself from within the biblical cosmological viewpoint adopted by its writers and audiences.

Several authors have highlighted the typical modern scholarly tactic of adopting a pre-analytical denial of any 'divine' ordainment of the Bible and then projecting into biblical passages modern concepts, values, principles, and ideas to find variations or readings or other so-called textual 'problems', thereby delegitimizing the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Evidently, a priori theological convictions about the Bible being the 'Word of God' or not is itself not a legitimate, authentic starting point for rational inquiry (Wallace, 2004).

English Translations

Very importantly, following the discussion about the common evangelical use of an English-language Bible (KJV), the repeated theme of the relevance of English translations of Scripture compared to other languages (Latin, Aramaic, Arabic, Hebrew, etc.) also needs to be underscored and discussed briefly especially as applied to multiple Bible-language context modern times (Greenslade, 1975).

Of course, it is argued that this multiple Bible-language context greatly increases the potential for corrupting biblical meaning. Consequently, the claim is made that it is better to use one particular language, that is the English version, as a paragon or archetype for other language translations of the Bible. In this way, it is assumed, the divine inspiration principle can be salvaged.

However, when we stop to examine this claim from a factual or historical perspective, this preferred method of translating

Scripture becomes counterproductive and ineffectual. Metzger (1993a) pointed out long ago in a great body of seminal work on the translation and linguistic history of the Bible that ‘God’s words’ endured in Greek for more than 1,300 years as well as in many other foreign languages.³ At that time, translations into foreign languages were made from original Greek manuscripts. So, then, since English did not exist, it was plausibly irrelevant from a translation point of view.

Further, even in modern times, say the 20th or 21st centuries, the English-version-only translation argument as a potential method of avoiding or minimizing interpretative distortions of ‘God’s word’ in Scripture doesn’t make much sense at least in nations where English is not the dominant language. Perhaps English-speaking missionaries would have a lot to say about this claim since often times they were sent to countries whose populations did not speak English, making the relevance of English Bibles questionable.

Obviously, those populations didn’t care very much about what some English-language Bible said. And even if they did on occasion show some interest, the capacity for accurate understanding must have been severely limited at best. That is probably why missionaries insisted for themselves to translate the Bible into the native language of the countries they preached within. The pragmatic and functional significance of this fact should not go unnoticed as it applies to the Greek test-translation debate.

It goes without saying that, to a significant degree, successful missionary work was predicated upon providing the native non-

³ It’s fascinating just to consider how many languages we are talking about here. Metzger notes that by 600 A.D., the Gospels had been translated into eight foreign languages. By the time the printing press was invented in the early 16th century, it was 33 foreign languages. By 1800, it had become 67 different language translations. By 1991, it was more than 315 languages but some parts of the Bible could be found in more than 1,900 languages and dialects! Metzger identified four key “translation periods”: early, post-printing, pioneer missionary, contemporary.

English speaking population an accurately translated copy of the Bible in their own language. This is why the early 'missionary period' was a highly significant period of time in the translation history of the Bible. In fact, often times the native language within which these missionaries found themselves did not even contain an alphabet and the range of vocabulary itself was extremely circumscribed! (Metzger, 1993a, p. 36).

So, then, it stands to reason missionaries had practical motivations to communicate and translate Scripture. They had to become thoroughly familiar with the native language and then work long hard hours over extended periods of time under challenging conditions to re-interpret Gospel passages into the native language, itself a process fraught with error as Gospel was bent to fit cultural linguistic requirements of 'understanding'.

Aside from the role of missionaries in the general history of biblical translations, the history of English translations of the Bible itself was by no means a smooth process either (Holmes, 2018; Greenslade, 1975; among many others). Lewis' historical review (1991) outlined in detail a great variety of difficulties were involved with complicated and sensitive political, economic, and religious factors playing center-stage roles in that process. Even to initiate an English translation was a difficult process. All the way up to nearly the end of the 14th century, the Roman church believed with a considerable degree of legitimate foresight that the Bible would become irremediably distorted if the Bible was translated into languages that common lay parishioners could understand.

For this reason, the church resisted providing novice biblical interpreters without training with a Bible in their own language. It wasn't until 1382 that the Oxford professor John Wyclif produced a translation from the Latin that English-language Bibles could be obtained, although there is great doubt among scholars about whether Wyclif himself actually did the translation himself. But scholars do agree that he certainly was

behind the drive to get one done as fast as possible since he was well-famed throughout all of Europe even at that time for frenetic and staunch opposition to the teachings of the Roman Church. It is implausible to believe that such political and ideological predispositions did not strongly influence this Wyclif directed translation process in terms of the actual translation of the meaning of biblical text!

Once he had an English-language manuscript in his hands, he instructed many of his followers to hand-copy many dozens more to be distributed at will to whomever so desired one. Needless to say, all the various Popes during that time and after Wyclif died remained absolutely incensed at his intentional undermining of the Catholic Christian faith through the translation process.

In fact, forty-four years after he died one Pope had his bones taken out of his grave, crushed into powder, and then scattered across a river. Still, Wyclif's 'Bible' remains the only English-language Bible that was NOT translated from Erasmus' Greek-language Textus Receptus (TR) or 'Received Text' as the Pope at that time put it in Latin, of course.

Preceded by Martin Luther's German translation of the Christian Bible in 1522 from Latin sources, next in the line of English-language bible translation history came the well-known Tyndale version (first English printed copy 1535). William Tyndale was another British Ivy League (Cambridge/Oxford) biblical scholar and linguist who was the first to translate the English Bible directly from Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, but again with the openly hostile and specific goal in mind to undermine the authority of the Roman Catholic Church in Reform style. He often met with several like-minded humanist Reform scholars at a local pub called the White Horse Inn who also later published their own versions of an English-Language Bible (Myles Coverdale, John Rogers (a.k.a. Thomas Matthews)), and others, most of them at the cost of their lives. Later versions were also primarily Tyndale's work.

He was also the first to use the printing press, the first to produce a Bible in support of the Reformation, and the first to use a name for God in his translation that was most palatable to English Reformers ('Jehovah'). In fact, he openly and avowedly translated the content of all manuscripts with the express intention and purpose of transforming Biblical concepts and doctrines into ideas that were preferred by an English-Protestant Reformer reading of the Bible at that time.

Lewis (1991) notes that 92% of the Tyndale translation was incorporated into the KJV of 1611, only the third English-language translation of the Bible to be officially 'authorized' in less than 100 years since English translations began. Later, we shall have more to say about the King James Version. Suffice it to say at this point yet once again, it is difficult to view this particular process as a perfect example of the principle of 'divine inspiration'. To add further doubt, research has shown that there never was an actual 'Tyndale' version of the Bible, strictly speaking, since he never published in his lifetime a complete English-language translation of Scripture.

A complete translation was finished by yet another friend, Myles Coverdale, who complemented Tyndale's translations with his own to produce the first printed English-language Bible in 1535. Before Tyndale was executed as a heretic, he had managed to translate the New Testament, the Pentateuch, and only the historical books of the Old Testaments.

A close friend at the time, surnamed Matthew, used Tyndale's translations of Old Testament documents to create his own Mathew Bible published in 1537 by another close friend, John Rogers, under a pseudonym of John Matthew, which also greatly influenced all subsequent English translations of the Scripture. The Matthew Bible combined Tyndale's translation of the New Testament and a great deal of Coverdale's translations of the Old Testament before he was finally captured and executed.

Cosmological Paradigm

As Wright (2003) and several other eminent biblical scholars have claimed, serious interpretative distortions can result from reading Scriptural text from within a post-Reformation Enlightenment modernist cosmological viewpoint. As mentioned earlier, the projection of modern theoretical viewpoints into ancient biblical texts leads inevitably to profound distortions of meaning by divorcing that text from its cosmological context.

The argument is that when contemporary readers project into ancient biblical passages modern theoretical perspectives such as feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic, South American liberationist, critical race, evolutionary, and the like, they are in effect projecting an 'Enlightenment' worldview into Biblical text which biblical writers and listeners themselves did not adhere to.

The Enlightenment constituted a movement away from the belief of a personal-sovereign-infinite God the Creator Father and, therefore, a movement away from the absolute Truth claims of the Christian Bible. In effect, there were no more absolute truths; all biblical truths became relativized to materialistic man-centered rather than God-centered factors such as concrete human history, culture, reason, and logic (Schaeffer, 1976; Pearcey, 2008).

Within this kind of worldview which rejects absolute divinely-ordained Truth itself, a political agenda is already established before the analysis of biblical text takes place which guides the interpretative process in the selection and analysis of meaning to fit the political agenda contained with the modernist cosmological paradigm. In other words, employing a modernist cosmological viewpoint in the interpretation and analysis of biblical texts which emanate from a completely foreign cosmology constitutes, in effect, a deliberate distortion and corruption of that text.

Of course, that evangelical assertion would most assuredly also apply to the historical development of all contemporary Greek-language translations of the Bible. Modern biblical scholars approaching such ancient texts from within a post-Enlightenment cosmological framework contained in radical feminist theory or liberation theology or psychoanalytic theory or reader-response theory and the like are simultaneously importing into their interpretative apparatus a worldview completely foreign to biblical writers and audiences.

Therefore, the conclusions that are drawn are more intimately related to their own cosmological framework than the one contained in the biblical passages under examination. In the end, it is not the viewpoint of the Biblical text itself that is outlined but, rather, the reference point for analysis becomes the particular theoretical perspective that is applied to study the Bible.

Obviously, the critical hermeneutical importance of adopting the perspective of the text itself in the study of the Bible should be recognized and fully respected, Greek translations of the New Testament included. That is, the dominant cosmological paradigm or worldview employed to critically evaluate the Greek text-translation debate should be that of the biblical writers themselves and their audience at that time, not post-Reformation/Enlightenment, post-modern, or secular cosmological paradigms. Projecting modern secular worldviews into ancient historical periods whose populations did not share such cosmologies means exegetic corruption by political interests prior to analysis.

Deliberate Corruption of Greek Manuscripts?

Another constant theme characterizing the literature on this debate is the untenable assertion about the calculated corruption of the Greek text. The assertion is that some Greek manuscripts were intentionally changed early in the transmission process in order to alter or remove established

doctrines at that time such as the virgin birth or the deity or even the name of Christ (Lovik, 1996; Parry, 1976). Here the related issue of the existence of several different Greek manuscript traditions needs to be recognized, although there is no room here for comprehensive analysis of this issue.

Here some biblical scholars have argued on purely assumed grounds that some variations in biblical narratives about the same events likely occurred due to deliberate distortion of established doctrinal teachings in the translation process especially deviations emanating from outside the Byzantine tradition. As test cases to prove such allegations, for example, some scholars have tried to identify Gospel passages (say, John 1:1; Acts 20:28; Thes 1:12; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; and 2 Pet 1:1) which identify Christ as 'God' and which don't.

These same authors also claim that manuscripts outside the Byzantine tradition even exclude some different names for Christ from the Greek translation. Then they would check out the different Bibles (KJV, RV, RSV, NEB, and so forth) to note the variations. But under close scrutiny, these allegations don't hold out when broader readings of those passages are made. For example, when the term 'blood' does not appear in one particular passage does not mean that it doesn't show up many times in other passages of the same text. This means, of course, that the term 'blood' retains its central significance within doctrinal teaching.

Here again, several authors have shown that such allegations about deliberate distortion or corruption of early Greek translations are largely unfounded (Lovik, 1991; Metzger, 1993a; Harris, 2019). Even if the same methodology is applied to the KJV, for example, it could be argued that it deletes the deity of Christ in at least four out of eight biblical passages (Parry, 1976). Does this show intentional removal of the deity of Jesus, really? Probably not. It is more likely that the Greek translators were simply following alternative translation traditions.

Faulty Transmission of Greek Texts

Yet another constant complaint in the research literature is the great concern that has developed about the authenticity of non-Byzantine manuscripts, as intimated above. Apparently, comparative word counts between translations really matter for some authors. Since these texts tend to have less words than even Erasmus' Textus Receptus, for example, it is often asserted that the translators deleted many words. Word deletions have been interpreted as unreliable or even dishonest translating. On the other hand, it could be argued that Erasmus' text has too many words and, therefore, his TR manuscript is untrustworthy for the opposite reason!

Since both problems should be a matter of concern to biblical scholars, how should it be resolved? The traditional and logical routes to resolution of this problem have themselves caused new problems of reliability. For example, many have tried to resolve it by using a sort of democratic approach towards particular translation copies. The argument is that if a majority of manuscripts share the same word count, then that particular translation is the most trustworthy (Peterson, 2019; Wallace, 1995; Holmes, 1983; Fee, 1980).

However, Metzger (1968b), among others, has argued convincingly that almost all Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were written under extreme conditions during the so-called 'Dark Ages' characterized by severe economic, political, and social disruptions as well as widespread famine and drastic population declines. Under these extreme conditions, word count differences between copies of the same Greek manuscript can be expected, and they don't necessarily mean deliberate corruption of biblical texts.

Another important and often overlooked issue that has been raised regarding questions about the copying of Greek manuscripts is the **cost** involved in producing them by hand. Harris (2019, 1882) has shown how expensive it was at that

time (circa 300 A.D.) for a trained professional copyist, clerk, scrivener, or scribe to produce just one hand-written copy of a Bible (30,000 denarii = \$21, 646 U.S. or \$15,678 NT at current exchange rates!). Obviously, the cost of copying manuscripts with high quality was prohibitive, a cost that only the wealthy could afford.

Both Harris and Metzger show that it wasn't until the 4th century that this copying situation changed when special rooms were created, usually in monasteries, and set apart from other adjoining rooms for the express purpose of copying manuscripts. Trained professional scribes would sit in these scriptoria, as they were known, listening to one loud voice reading from a particular manuscript and copying down what they heard. In this way, multiple copies of translated text were produced. Of course, numerous errors were still made, so 'correctors' were hired to check each copying work.

Even in this special scriptorium situation, copying manuscripts was commonly a lonely, solitary exercise. Not many professionals preferred this line of 'copying' work outside of the monasteries. During the continuation of the Roman Empire in its eastern territories (Late Antiquity/Middle Ages), monks in monasteries working in solitary cells of three or four members were almost the exclusive ones reproducing manuscripts either for themselves or for a benefactor. Still, Metzger is at pains to point out that the process was fraught with errors as it involved many distinct operations such as movement of the hand, retaining material in memory, and reading aloud to oneself lines or clauses (Metzger, 1968a).

References to the Old Testament

Lastly, another significant concern expressed in the research literature about the Greek text-translation controversy refers to the use of Old Testament passages within the New Testament (Archer, 2001; Archer and Chirichigno, 2005). This important issue concerns the transmission of the Hebrew manuscripts of

the Old Testament. Archer noted that this transmission was totally dependent upon a single Hebrew manuscript from the 10th century and a few even later partial manuscripts. What's more, the transmission of Hebrew manuscripts used in the Old Testament was largely undertaken by Jewish scholars who did not believe in Christ. This raises a question about whether an unbelieving Jewish translator of Hebrew text into the Greek language would translate that text differently than a believing Jewish translator.

Another issue that arises from the transmission of Hebrew text into the New Testament relates to when Jesus is quoted by Gospel writers when He himself referred to passages in the Old Testament. When the Greek reading differed from the Hebrew reading as it pertained to these specific passages, some scholars have noted that the Gospel writers often quoted from the Greek translation, not the Hebrew original. Since the Hebrew reading would arguably be the most accurate and 'inspired' reading, strictly speaking, it would seem logical that the Gospel writers of the New Testament would prefer to employ the Hebrew reading which they could then convert into the Greek language as is.

However, it appears that they wanted to use the Greek Septuagint (LXX), so there have been some questions about why this would be the expressed reference. A moment's reflection might solve this conundrum because, after all, that was the language of the audience which the Gospel writers were addressing at the time. Therefore, Archer and Chirichigno point out, the New Testament writers found this custom to be a wholly legitimate practice, and most contemporary biblical scholars have tended to agree.

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