

SALT & LIGHT (A CHRISTIAN JOURNAL)

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Rightful Succession and Imposture: The Case of the Septuagint vs. the Masoretic Text

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I. Prologue

The Canon of Scripture consists of two segments, one of which is termed 'the Canon¹ of Old Covenant scripture', and the other, 'the Canon of New Covenant scripture'. At the conceptual level, the two segments constitute a coherent and indivisible whole; however, at the practical level, it is necessary to recognize the distinction, for each segment has a distinct historical origin.

While many Christians consider choice of an English translation of Scripture to be a matter of considerable importance², few give even the slightest thought to the original manuscripts upon which the translations are based, and few are aware of the fact that, from the standpoint of the original manuscripts of Scripture, counterfeiting has been a serious problem.

¹The English word 'canon' is derived from a Latin word which means ruler, rule, model, or standard; the term typically is used to designate the set of documents which legitimately govern the Christian Faith, that is, the set of documents which properly comprise the Bible. Because of tradition and other factors, the typical English Bible contains several 'non-canonical' books—books which are not divinely-inspired, and thus have no proper place in the Bible.

²Christians routinely debate the merits of the various English translations of Scripture. While some translations clearly are superior to others, there is no such thing as a 'best' translation, for it is impossible for a translation to be theologically-neutral: every translation unavoidably is tainted by the theology of the translator. A translation can do little more than serve as a common frame of reference among students of the Scripture. Every pastor and teacher must inspect for himself the Greek text, and, in the light of his own theological understanding, correct the translation according to the demands of the context.

While the dependence of the Christian Faith upon the New Covenant Canon is recognized universally, relatively few understand that the Christian Faith likewise is dependent upon the Old Covenant Canon. Although the Old Covenant long ago was irreversibly dissolved, Hebrews 8:13, the Scripture of the Old Covenant is of lasting value to the Christian. This is because the Canon of Old Covenant Scripture is many things, and serves many purposes. The Canon contains an account of the creation of the earth and of the origin of Adamic man; a record of the original act of rebellion; a decree of judgment; a declaration of the consequence of the rebellion; and a prophecy of eventual victory. It is a treasury of promises of an everlasting nature. It is a repository for detailed prophecies, some of which remain yet to be fulfilled. It is a testimony to the faithfulness of our God. It is a codification and guide for application of the unchanging Law of God. It provides a book of divinely-sanctioned hymns of worship and praise. It records a genealogy which establishes the history of the sons of God, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to Christ Jesus, and the entitlement of Christ Jesus to the throne of his father, David. It contains a history of the physical descendants of the line Abraham-Isaac-Jacob, wherein is recorded the progression of the tribes of Israel from an enslaved people, few in number, to an enlightened, prosperous multitude of nations collectively known as Christendom. It chronicles the characteristic failures of the Adamic race and the nation Israel, and of the characteristic stratagems of the ancient and perennial enemies of the people of God. It is the backdrop against which the events of the New Covenant era are played. It is the scheme which sets forth the basics of the grand design of the Creator, knowledge of which is essential to a correct understanding of the New Covenant and New Covenant Scripture.

From its inception, the Christian Faith has been almost constantly under attack. The Jews, the Papacy, and the State all have made determined efforts to eradicate all vestiges of Christianity. In their attempts to subvert and destroy the Christian Faith, the enemies of Christ continually focus upon the Canon of Scripture, for they understand the power of the Word of God and the fact that the Scripture is central to the Christian Faith. These enemies have sought to destroy the Canon; they have sought to deny the Christian access to the Canon; they have sought to render the Christian incapable of reading the Canon; they have sought to pervert the Christian's understanding of the Canon; they have sought to seduce the Christian to abandon the

Canon and embrace substitutes; and they have sought to foist upon the Christian counterfeits of the Canon. And of all these methods of attack, it is in the realm of counterfeiting that the enemies of Christ have achieved some of their most remarkable and enduring successes.

1. Counterfeiting of the New

The method of counterfeiting differs significantly for the two segments of the Scripture. The Canon of New Covenant scripture began life as individual documents, each written by one of the twelve apostles, or by a close associate of an apostle, under the aegis of the apostle. These documents circulated independently among the local assemblies. Typically, a local assembly would make and retain a copy each document which came into its possession, so that its collection of documents grew over time. The means whereby a given document could be authenticated is given by Paul, in the command, “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good,*” 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

After the death of the last of the twelve apostles, legitimate additions to the Canon of Scripture ceased for ever. Nonetheless, in the post-apostolic era, counterfeit documents continued to be produced and circulated. And in the post-apostolic era, there were held various ‘Church councils’, some of which attempted to settle once and for all the matter of which documents legitimately have place in the Canon of New Covenant scripture. But with the death of the last of the twelve, no longer was it legitimate for an individual or a group to exercise authority over more than one local assembly. Nor was it legitimate for any ‘Church council’ to decide for all local assemblies and for all time the canonicity of a document; for to do so is to set aside the command of Paul, to prove all things.

But ‘Church councils’ did convene, and issues of theology and canonicity were debated and supposedly ‘settled’. One result of the ‘Church councils’ is that several obviously-counterfeit documents were decreed canonical. Regrettably, the endorsement of the ‘Church councils’ has led to widespread acceptance of these spurious documents as genuine.

The documents in question include the book of Revelation, the book of James, the book of Jude, and the book of II Peter. A detailed critique of these counterfeits is beyond the scope of the present article; however, it is not difficult for the average Christian to investigate the matter for himself. The counterfeits demonstrate their spurious nature in multiple ways, but primarily in their linguistic style and in their obvious conflict with documents, the canonicity of which is unquestioned. For example, the lofty linguistic style of the book of Revelation differs so radically from the simple linguistic style of the Gospel account of John and the epistles of John, that Greek scholars generally conclude that the writer of the Gospel account could not possibly have written the book of Revelation. As another example, the book of James conflicts time and time again with the books of Moses and with the epistles of Paul.

The command of Paul, to prove all things, remains in effect in the present day, though few Christians realize the fact. The Christian (or, at least, the pastor-teacher of the local assembly) has the responsibility to verify for himself the genuineness of a document before he accepts it as canonical. This is not a difficult task, for, in every age, devout and scholarly men have

devoted themselves to the task of textual criticism, and have published their findings. Scholarly commentaries typically discuss at length the issues of canonicity before proceeding with analysis and commentary of a particular document. Thus, and particularly in the present day, it takes little more than a few hours to inspect the arguments regarding canonicity of any particular book found in the Bible, after which it should not be difficult to decide whether to accept the book as canonical, or to reject it as spurious.

2. Counterfeiting of the Old

There is little dispute as to which documents comprise the Old Covenant Canon. The only spurious document appears to be the book of Esther. The book makes no mention of God and is utterly devoid of the indictments and admonitions which characterize every legitimate book of Old Covenant scripture. While Jesus or the apostles make reference to virtually every book or division of Old Covenant Canon, no such reference can be found for the book of Esther. The book of Esther obviously is a fabrication of the unregenerate Jew, written with the express purpose of indoctrinating the Christian with the concept that revenge on the part of the Jew is condoned by the Eternal.

However, the counterfeit book of Esther is of minor importance in comparison with the matter of Masoretic Text, which, since its publication relatively late in the Christian era, has become commonly-accepted as the Canon of Old Covenant scripture. The Masoretic Text is a document written in a variant of Hebrew which is known as Masoretic Hebrew. Masoretic Hebrew was not developed until centuries after the Resurrection of Christ Jesus, and is a language distinct from the ancient Hebrew of the patriarchs.

But there is a factor which still more vital than the difference between Masoretic Hebrew and the ancient Hebrew language. Christ Jesus, the apostles, and the early Church neither venerated nor quoted from the Hebrew manuscripts of Old Covenant scripture. Rather, they quote from a source which, though once venerated by Jew and Christian alike as the official Canon of Old Covenant scripture, has become virtually unknown today. This source is the Septuagint, which is a translation into Greek of the ancient Hebrew Canon of scripture, made a century or more before the birth of Christ Jesus. It was the Septuagint, rather than the ancient Hebrew Canon, which was preserved by the early Church. But almost immediately upon publication of the Masoretic Text, veneration of the Septuagint ceased, at least within the Western world. Seldom has a counterfeit been so successful. And indeed, the Masoretic Text is but a Jewish counterfeit of the ancient Hebrew Canon. The factor which ensured acceptance of the Masoretic Text was its adoption by William Tyndale, who was the first man to undertake translation of the Bible directly from the original languages into English. With two notable exceptions, virtually every subsequent English translation of the Scripture has been based upon the counterfeit Masoretic Text.

The acceptance of this Jewish counterfeit has had grave and far-reaching implications for the Christian Church. Inasmuch as Hebrew is a dead language—indeed, it was the demise of ancient Hebrew which led to embrace of the Septuagint long before the Incarnation—the Jew, with his Talmud, is the sole

authority with respect to the Hebrew language. Inasmuch as an understanding of the New Covenant Canon is dependent upon an understanding of the Old Covenant Canon, the Christian who has rejected (or is ignorant of) the Septuagint is dependent upon the Masoretic Text, and therefore, is dependent upon the Jew. And where the Jew is found, there also is found the Talmudic leaven of the Jew. Consequently, embrace of the counterfeit thwarts any attempts which may be made to isolate Christianity from the leaven of the Jew.

II. The Genesis of the English Bible

The modern English Bible began with the translation of the New Covenant Scripture and the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses). This translation was made by William Tyndale, who lived from A. D. 1484 to A. D. 1536. The book *Actes & Monuments* by John Fox (popularly known as *Fox's Book of Martyrs*) relates the impetus which drove Tyndale to his monumental labour:

There dwelt not far off a certain doctor, that had been chancellor to a bishop, who had been of old, familiar acquaintance with Master Tyndale, and favoured him well; unto whom Master Tyndale went and opened his mind upon divers questions of the Scripture: for to him he durst be bold to disclose his heart. Upon whom the doctor said, "*Do you not know that the Pope is very Antichrist, whom the Scripture speaketh of? But beware what you say; for if you shall be perceived to be of that opinion, it will cost you your life.*"

Not long after, Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and, in communing and disputing with him, he drave him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, "*We were better to be without God's laws than the Pope's.*" Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied, "*I defy the Pope, and all his laws;*" and added, that if God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough, to know more of the Scripture than he [the Pope] did.

Tyndale spoke these words in A. D. 1520, at the age of 36. By A. D. 1525, Tyndale had translated and printed the whole of the New Covenant Scripture.

Speaking on the need for the Scripture in written form in the native tongue of the people, Tyndale said, "*I had perceived by experience how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except that the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text.*"

In A. D. 1536, by decree of the emperor, William Tyndale was murdered, being strangled and then burned at the stake. His last words were the prayer, "*Lord! Open the king of England's eyes!*" It is to Tyndale that Christendom owes the elegance and clarity which characterizes the English Bible. Subsequent English translations, for the most part, are but inferior imitations and degradations of the literary style which Tyndale established.

Although credit for the first translation into English of the entire Bible belongs to John Wycliffe (A. D. 1324 – A. D. 1384), Wycliffe translated from the Vulgate. Tyndale,

however, translated the scriptures of the New Covenant from the Greek. In translating the scriptures of the Old Covenant, Tyndale used as his source the only Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture then known to exist—the so-called 'Masoretic Text'. Although the Scripture of the Old Covenant has been preserved in at least two other languages, Tyndale appears to have used the Masoretic Text exclusively.

The practice of exclusive dependence upon the Masoretic Text begun with Tyndale was continued with subsequent English translations, up to and including the King James version. The English Revised Version, published toward the end of the 19th century, was the first modern English translation which took notice of Old Covenant manuscripts other than the Masoretic Text.

III. The History of the Septuagint

Many Christians have never heard of the Septuagint, although the Septuagint has had a direct and profound impact upon Christianity.

1. Adoption and Veneration

Contrary to popular notion, Jesus, the apostles, and the early Church did not rely upon Ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture. This is largely because the remnant of Judah and those of the dispersion had long since abandoned the Ancient Hebrew language. In its place, they had adopted Aramaic and Greek.

Instead of the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts, they took as their official Canon of Old Covenant scripture a Greek translation of the Ancient Hebrew Canon—a translation made long before the Incarnation. The translation is known as the *Septuagint*, from the Latin word for seventy. The name reflects the fact that the translation is the work of a group of approximately seventy Hebrew translators. (The actual number of translators originally assembled is reported to have been seventy-two.) The Septuagint is often referred to as the *LXX*, *LXX* being the number *seventy* expressed in Roman numerals.

During the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, 285–246 B. C., Israelite translators were assembled in Alexandria, Egypt, and given the commission of translating into Greek the five books of Moses, collectively called the *Pentateuch*. Subsequently, the remaining books of the Ancient Hebrew Canon were translated. The entire work appears to have been completed no later than 150 B. C.

At the time the Septuagint was translated, a remnant had returned from the Babylonian captivity and had rebuilt the temple. The last books of the Old Covenant Canon of Scripture had been completed. A fact of supreme importance is that the Septuagint was translated from the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts—not from the Masoretic Text. Indeed, the Masoretic Text did not come into existence until a number of centuries after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Also of highest importance is the fact that, at the time the translation was made, the House of Judah was still in covenantal relationship with the Eternal. Thus, the Levites of the Southern Kingdom were still the legitimate custodians of the Canon, and consequently had the prerogative of making the translation—even as the Christian today, by virtue of his priesthood, has the pre-

rogative of translating the Canon into English, or German, or French, etc. The fact that Jesus and the apostles quote extensively from the Septuagint attests to the integrity of the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts from which the Septuagint was translated, and establishes the fact that the translation is both legitimate and faithful to the original Ancient Hebrew Canon.

Like the Scriptures of the New Covenant, the Septuagint is written in a variant of the Greek language called *koine*. *Koine* is a Greek word meaning *common*, in the sense of *universal*. Prior to the rise of Rome, the conquests of Alexander the Great had established *koine* as a universal language throughout the Mediterranean region and Asia Minor. Consequently, *koine* became the common language of the Roman Empire. *Koine* differs significantly from the literary variant of the Greek language, *Attic*, which was the language of Athens.

2. Precursor of the Gospel

Though few Christians are aware of the fact, the Septuagint played a vital role in the initial evangelization of the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus portrays the repentance of the divorced tribes of Israel, and their longing for a renewed relationship with their heavenly Father.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

– Luke 15:11–19

The epistles bear evidence that many of those to whom the Gospel was proclaimed were already aware of their Israelite heritage and of the promise that divorced Israel would be reunited with Judah and brought again into covenantal relationship with the Eternal. From whence did Israelites of the dispersion have this expectancy? It appears that, much as John the Baptist was sent as a herald of Christ to prepare the way for the

Gospel in Judah (Malachi 3:1, Isaiah 40:3, Luke 1:16–17), so also the Septuagint was sent by God as a precursor of Christ to the tribes of the Dispersion.

The Case of Cornelius Some, on the basis of Peter's report concerning the conversion of Cornelius, would question the propriety of translating the Old Covenant canon, in order to give access to the Scripture to those not in covenantal relationship.

And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

– Acts 10:28

Was it indeed unlawful for Israelite translators to assemble in Egypt and labour on behalf of an Egyptian ruler? If so, then one must seriously question the legitimacy of the Septuagint.

The Greek word which the King James version translates 'unlawful' is *athemitos*, meaning 'forbidden' or 'disgusting' (as of idolatry). As the next clause demonstrates, it is the traditions of the Jews—not the law of Moses—which forbade keeping company with men of other nations. And Jesus repeatedly condemns the traditions of the Jews.

Another basis for questioning the propriety of the translation and distribution is the injunction of Jesus, regarding giving that which is holy unto dogs, and pearls unto swine:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

– Matthew 7:6

In order to understand that which Jesus is saying, it is necessary to realize that the phrase, "*turn again and rend you*" describes the action of dogs, while the phrase "*trample them under their feet*" describes the action of swine. The phrases, "*that which is holy*" and "*your pearls*" both appear to be references to the concepts taught in the Scripture, that is, the things of God. Swine are they which have no appreciation for the things of God, and are indifferent to the Word. Accordingly, when one cites Scripture to swine or speaks to swine concerning the things of God, the swine trample it underfoot; the Greek verb is *katapateo*, meaning to treat with rudeness or insult, to spurn, to treat with insulting neglect.

Dogs likewise have no appreciation for the things of God; however, unlike swine, dogs are not indifferent to the Word. Instead, dogs take offense upon hearing the Word and attack those who are teaching the Word. Dogs are said to 'turn again', which is the Greek verb *strepho*, meaning to change one's course of conduct or to change one's mind. This indicates that the dog will give a hearing to the Word, and at first may appear receptive; but a point is reached at which the dog turns on the teacher. The word 'rend' is the Greek verb *rhegnumi*, meaning to tear to pieces. The behaviour of the dog is seen in the account of the testimony of Stephen, found in the 7th chapter of the book of Acts. After listening to Stephen for some time, the Jews suddenly became enraged, and rose up together and murdered him:

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. 54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

– Acts 7:51–60

Clearly, then, those for whom the Septuagint was translated were neither ‘swine’ nor ‘dogs’, so no objection to the translation can be made on the basis of Matthew 7:6.

Finally, there is the question of why Israelites in covenantal relationship with the Eternal would labour willingly in order to give non-Israelites access to the Canon of Scripture. The most likely answer is that they did not do so. It is probable that the translators of the Septuagint knew that they were labouring to send forth the Word of God to their countrymen, i.e., to Israelites of the dispersion.

It may even have been the case that the ruling class of Egypt at the time was composed of Israelites of the dispersion. After all, Joseph had been elevated from slavery to the office of prime minister of Egypt; Daniel and his three companions were raised from captivity to the highest offices of the Babylonian empire; and Daniel subsequently was promoted to the highest office of the Persian empire of Cyrus. It is quite possible that the commission of Ptolemy to translate the Ancient Hebrew scriptures into Greek originated with an Israelite of the dispersion, motivated by the Spirit of God.

3. Prepared, Insulated, and Independent

Once in possession of the Septuagint, Israelites of the dispersion were able to read and study for themselves the Law and the Prophets. Thus were they brought to repentance. Thus were they able to anticipate their redemption. Thus did they learn when Messiah would appear. Thus were they able to appreciate the great price of their redemption and the undying love of the husband from whom they were separated by divorce. Thus were they prepared to receive the Gospel of the Kingdom and to enter into a new covenantal relationship with the Eternal.

Yet, the Septuagint served still another vital function with respect to the dispersed sheep of the House of Israel—that of isolating them from the leavening influence of the Talmudic Jew. The encounters between Paul and James, recorded in the book of Acts and in the epistle of Paul to the Galatians, reveal that the congregation in Jerusalem, together with its leaders,

was soon corrupted by the leaven of the Pharisee and had itself become an agent of leavening, Acts 21:17–24 and Galatians 2:1–14. Had the so-called ‘Gentile’ church been dependent upon the Jew for instruction in the Scripture of the Old Covenant, there is little doubt that it rapidly would have fallen victim to the leaven of the evil Pharisee, as did the church at Jerusalem. For, contrary to the notion fostered by the Jew—that, throughout modern history, the Church has persecuted the Jew—the Scripture teaches that the son which was born of the flesh (the Jew) persecutes the son born of the Spirit (the Christian), Galatians 4:21–31.

The danger posed by contact with the Jew may be seen quite plainly by perusing any modern, scholarly commentary on the Scripture. When analyzing passages in the Masoretic Text, one constantly encounters linguistic mysteries. After all, Masoretic Hebrew—like Ancient Hebrew—is a dead language. Furthermore, Masoretic Hebrew is a complex language. Inasmuch as the Jew and his Talmud form the sole authority regarding all things Hebrew—including Ancient Hebrew, Masoretic Hebrew, and the Masoretic Text—Christians studying and analyzing the Scripture have no alternative but to turn to the Jew for enlightenment regarding obscure words, expressions, and passages in the Masoretic Text. Thus, in virtually every scholarly Christian commentary there are to be found numerous quotations by various rabbis, discussing Talmudic interpretations of the passages under consideration. Our adoption of the Masoretic Text has given the Jew abundant opportunity to spread his evil leaven, and to do so among the teachers of modern-day Israel. And those who embrace the counterfeit Masoretic Text thereby elevate the Jewish Talmud to a position of authority superior to that of the Scripture.

However, being in possession of the Septuagint, the sheep of the Dispersion had no need for consultation or contact with the Jew. In this respect, they would later be exhorted by the apostle Paul, “*For freedom Christ frees us! Stand firm, then, and be not again enthralled with the yoke of slavery*”, Galatians 5:1 (Concordant Literal).

IV. The History of the Masoretic Text

As previously has been noted, from its inception, the modern English Bible has been based on the Masoretic Text. That is, the Scriptures of the Old Covenant found in the modern English Bible have been translated directly from the Masoretic Text, with little or no consideration being given to the reading of the Septuagint or other manuscripts of Old Covenant Scripture. Although Christians frequently debate the faithfulness of the available English translations of Scripture, most are oblivious to a matter of far greater import, namely, the faithfulness of the Masoretic Text itself. The situation is due to the fact that Christians generally are ignorant of the history of the Masoretic Text.

1. Abandonment and Death

Historians report that the Ancient Hebrew language had largely fallen into disuse by the time of the Incarnation. The Israelites carried off captive by Assyria circa 721 B.C. were subsequently dispersed throughout the region later dominated by Greece and Rome. Consequently, those of the dispersion—the

Lost Sheep to whom Jesus was sent, Matthew 15:24—generally spoke *koine*.

The remnant of Judah carried off captive to Babylon circa 586 B. C. also underwent a change in language. During the seventy years of captivity, the Babylonian empire was conquered by Persia. The common language of the Persian empire, Aramaic, became the common language of the remnant. Following the return of the remnant and the rebuilding of the temple, the land once populated by the thirteen tribes of Israel repeatedly passed from one dominion to another until, nearly five centuries later, Judea became a province of Rome. Although Latin was the official language of Rome, *koine* was the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire. Under the domination of Rome, those of the remnant came to speak *koine*, in addition to Aramaic.

With the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, Ancient Hebrew became a dead language. The Levitical priesthood—which, prior to the Crucifixion, had custodianship of the Canon of Scripture—had been invalidated more than forty years previously, upon the death of Christ Jesus. For the most part, the scribes and Pharisees who might have kept the language alive perished in the fall of Jerusalem. The early Church had the Septuagint, recognizing it as the authoritative Canon of Old Covenant Scripture. Consequently, those of the remnant who embraced Christianity no longer had need for Hebrew.

2. Exhumation and Reanimation

More than five hundred years after the Crucifixion, unregenerate Jews, claiming to be successors of the scribes, began working to revive the defunct Ancient Hebrew language, and to breathe new life into the abandoned Ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture. These Jews were known by the name *Masorete*, also spelled *Massorete*. The name is derived from the Masoretic Hebrew verb *masar*, which means to transmit, to deliver something into the hand of another in the sense of committing the object into the other's trust.

The activity of the Masorete was originally centered at Babylon and Tiberias. The activity continued until the 9th or 10th century A. D., and perhaps beyond. The eventual product of this activity was a manuscript of Old Covenant Scripture known today as the *Masoretic Text*.

3. Linguistic Transmogrification

As is the case with any spoken language, Ancient Hebrew had both vowels and consonants. However, Ancient Hebrew vowels apparently had no written representation. It appears that the Ancient Hebrew alphabet consisted of twenty-two letters, all of which generally are regarded as consonants. Although not recorded in documents, vowels were understood on the basis of context and tradition, being mentally inserted by the reader. This situation persisted throughout the active life of the Ancient Hebrew language—a period of well over a thousand years.

It is commonly supposed that the work of the Masorete

was limited to development of a system of annotation—called *pointing*—for indicating vowels, and annotation of the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts. The purpose of the annotation, ostensibly, was to establish for posterity the correct pronunciation of each Ancient Hebrew word. Thus, it is generally believed that the Masoretic Text is nothing more than the Ancient Hebrew text which has been pointed, i.e., an Ancient Hebrew manuscript to which vowel points have been added.

However, it turns out that the undertaking involved alterations of a much more fundamental nature. Indeed, upon the rubble of Ancient Hebrew, the Masorete erected a significantly different language of much greater complexity—a language which appears to have been created for the express purpose of facilitating wholesale alteration of the manuscripts of Old Covenant Scripture. The Masorete then translated the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture into the new language, in the process taking great liberties.

Adam Clarke, an 18th Century Anglican scholar, makes it clear that the work of the Masoretes is, in reality, a commentary which has been integrated into the body of Scripture. Moreover, Clarke points out that the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text (Masoretic Hebrew) is quite different from the Hebrew of the patriarchs (Ancient Hebrew) in which Old Covenant Scripture was originally written.

In the *General Preface* of his commentary on the Scriptures³, published in 1810, Clarke writes,

The Masoretes were the most extensive Jewish commentators which that nation could ever boast. The system of punctuation, probably invented by them, is a continual gloss⁴ on the Law and Prophets; their vowel points, and prosaic and metrical accents, etc., give every word to which they are affixed a peculiar kind of meaning, which in their simple state multitudes of them can by no means bear. The vowel points alone add whole conjugations to the language. This system is one of the most artificial, particular, and extensive comments ever written on the word of God; for there is not one word in the Bible that is not the subject of a particular gloss through its influence. This school is supposed to have commenced about 450 years before our Lord, and to have extended down to A. D. 1030. Some think it did not commence before the fifth century.

Even without adding to, deleting from, or changing a single letter of the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture, pointing gave the Masorete power to dramatically change the meaning of almost any given passage of Scripture, for the prerogative of selecting vowels is, to a large extent, the prerogative of selecting words. As a crude example, consider how the meaning of an English sentence might be changed by substitution of the word *poor* for the word *pure*—a substitution which may be effected by a simple change of vowels.

Clarke appears to be one of the few commentators who have seen fully the significance of the Masoretic Text—namely, that it is a new *version* of the Scripture, written in a new *language*. Obviously, Hebrew scholars have been aware of this

³The full title of Clarke's commentary is: *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments :: The Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorized Translation, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts with a Commentary and Critical Notes Designed as a Help to a Better Understanding of the Sacred Writings :: A New Edition, with the Author's Final Corrections*

⁴The dictionary of Noah Webster published in 1828 shows the following meanings for the word *gloss*: (1) Brightness or lustre of a body proceeding from a smooth surface. (2) A specious appearance of representation; external show that may mislead opinion. (3) An interpretation artfully specious. (4) Interpretation; comment; explanation; remark intended to illustrate a subject. (5) A literal translation.

fact. They should have called attention to the difference between Ancient Hebrew and the language of the Masoretes, and should have differentiated the two, by use of names such as *Ancient Hebrew* and *Masoretic Hebrew*. However, the majority of Hebrew scholars are Jewish, and thus cannot be expected to be objective and candid regarding such a matter.

4. Editorial Bias

Textual critics long ago established that there are numerous and significant differences between the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text, one of them being that the text of the Septuagint is significantly longer than that of the Masoretic Text. Inasmuch as the Septuagint was translated directly from the Ancient Hebrew and subsequently was authenticated by Jesus and the apostles, and in view of the nature of the discrepancies, it appears that the Masoretes made substantial alterations in the Ancient Hebrew text, as well as omitting material which legitimately is part of the Canon of Scripture.

One of the first scholars to investigate the matter was Louis Cappel, a French Huguenot divine and scholar who lived from A. D. 1585 to A. D. 1658. Consider the following excerpt from the article, "*CAPPEL, LOUIS*", found in the 1948 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

As a Hebrew scholar, he concluded that the vowel points and accents were not an original part of Hebrew, but were inserted by the Massorete Jews of Tiberias, not earlier than the 5th century A. D., and that the primitive Hebrew characters are those now known as the Samaritan, while the square characters are Aramaic and were substituted for the more ancient at the time of the captivity. ... The various readings in the Old Testament Text and the differences between the ancient versions and the Massoretic Text convinced him that the integrity of the Hebrew text, as held by Protestants, was untenable. This amounted to an attack upon the verbal inspiration of Scripture. Bitter, however, as was the opposition, it was not long before his results were accepted by scholars.

The Masoretic Text appears not merely to have been corrupted, but to have been purposely corrupted, as an attack upon the Christian faith. Regarding this matter, consider the testimony of Adam Clarke. Clarke is commenting upon Hebrews 1:6, "*And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him*".

There has been some difficulty in ascertaining the place from which the apostle quotes these words; some suppose Psa. xcvi. 7: Worship him, all ye gods; which the Septuagint translate thus: *proskunesate auto, pantes aggeloi auton, Worship him, all ye his angels*; but it is not clear that the messiah is intended in this psalm, nor are the words precisely those used here by the apostle. Our marginal references send us with great propriety to the Septuagint version of Deut. xxxii. 43, where the passage is found *verbatim et literatim*; but there is nothing answering to the words in the present Hebrew text. The apostle undoubtedly quoted the Septuagint, which had then been for more than 300 years a version of the highest repute among the Jews; and it is very probable that the copy from which the Seventy translated had the corresponding words. However this may be, they are now sanctioned by Divine authority; and as the verse

contains some singular additions, I will set it down in a parallel column with that of our own version, which was taken immediately from the Hebrew text, premising simply this, that it is the last verse of the famous prophetic song of Moses, which seems to point out the advent of the Messiah to discomfit his enemies, purify the land, and redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Deut. xxxii. 43, from the Hebrew.

[...] Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; [...] for he will avenge the blood of his servants; [...] and will render vengeance to his adversaries; [...] and [...] will be merciful to his land and to his people.

Deut. xxxii. 43, from the Septuagint.

Rejoice, ye heaven, together with him; and let all the angels of God worship him. Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people; and let the children of God be strengthened in him; for he will avenge the blood of his children; he will avenge, and will repay judgment to his adversaries; and those who hate him will he recompense: and the Lord will purge the land of his people. This is a very important verse; and to it, as it stands in the Septuagint, St. Paul has referred once before; see Rom. xv. 10. This very verse, as it stands now in the Septuagint, thus referred to by an inspired writer, shows the great importance of this ancient version; and proves the necessity of its being studied and well understood by every minister of Christ. In Rom. iii. there is a large quotation from Psalm xiv., where there are six whole verses in the apostle's quotation which are not found in the present Hebrew text, but are preserved in the Septuagint! How strange it is that this venerable and important version, so often quoted by our Lord and all his apostles, should be so generally neglected, and so little known! That the common people should be ignorant of it, is not to be wondered at, as it has never been put in an English dress; but that the ministers of the Gospel should be unacquainted with it may be spoken to their shame.

These blatant examples should move the Christian to ask how many additional instances of deceitful editing are to be found within the Masoretic Text.

5. Evidence of Extirpation

Until recently, the Masoretic Text appeared to be the only form in which Hebrew manuscripts of Old Covenant Scripture have been preserved: there appeared to be absolutely no surviving Ancient Hebrew manuscripts. The situation is highly curious, if not downright suspicious, for we have complete copies of the Septuagint which date from about the 3rd century, and early Greek manuscripts of New Covenant Scripture have been discovered in abundance. Unless the Masoretic Text is a complete fabrication—i.e., a translation from the Septuagint into Masoretic Hebrew—one must assume that the Masorete based his work on Ancient Hebrew manuscripts. Inasmuch as the Masorete worked in the Christian era—apparently starting about the 5th century—and did not complete his Masoretic Text until the 9th or 10th century, it would appear that Ancient Hebrew manuscripts were in existence as late as the 5th century, and likely until the 10th century. How, then, can it be that no specimens of the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts survived to the present day? The disappearance of Ancient Hebrew manuscripts makes it impossible to determine precisely the extent of the alterations made by the Masoretes. Unquestionably,

the Septuagint preserves the *sense* of the Ancient Hebrew text; however, being a translation, the Septuagint cannot be used to effect a precise, word-for-word reconstruction of the vanished Ancient Hebrew text.

The seeming complete disappearance of Ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture raises the question of whether the Jew—ever engaged in attempts to subvert and overthrow Christianity—made a deliberate and determined effort to destroy all Ancient Hebrew manuscripts. In light of the conspiracy of the Jew to conceal the fact of the resurrection, Matthew 28:11–15, and in view of the previously-discussed examples of excision of individual phrases within messianic passages, is such a scheme unthinkable? Destruction of the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts would make it difficult to plainly and unequivocally demonstrate the corrupt nature of the Masoretic Text, and thus would go far toward ensuring uncritical acceptance of the Masoretic Text. In fact, that is precisely what has occurred. When the faithfulness of the Masoretic Text is challenged on the basis of a reading found in the Septuagint, the Jew immediately casts aspersions upon the Septuagint, pointing to the fact that the Septuagint is a translation. Of course, in doing so, the deceitful Jew hopes to draw attention away from the fact that the Masoretic Text itself is a translation. It has long been rumored that copies of Ancient Hebrew manuscripts were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. However, as late as fifty years after discovery of the scrolls, a very substantial portion of the Qumran find had yet to be published, remaining cloistered and in Jewish hands. Finally, however, there has been published, in facsimile and in English translation, what is purported to be an Ancient Hebrew manuscript of Old Covenant Scripture from the Qumran find. Although this document may prove valuable in discrediting the Masoretic Text and restoring the Septuagint to its rightful place of veneration, the fact remains that the Septuagint is the Canon of Old Covenant Scripture from which Jesus and the apostles quoted. Consequently, it is the Septuagint which we must take as authoritative, irrespective of past or future discoveries in the field of archaeology.

6. Enticement and Infiltration

It may be impossible to establish with precision the epoch at which the Church first came into possession of the Masoretic Text. However, in all probability, this did not occur until the 15th century, when the entire Masoretic Text first became available in printed form, being published in A. D. 1488 by Jews in Soncino, Italy.

Indeed, the argument that the Church adopted the Masoretic Text prior to its publication in the 15th century appears untenable. Manuscripts are subject to wear and tear in normal use, and consequently must be replaced periodically. The process of printing with moveable type was not developed until the 15th century, so, prior to that time, manuscripts had to be copied by hand. In its orthography, Masoretic Hebrew is a highly complex language, as evidenced by the elaborate systems and procedures the Masorete developed in an attempt to ensure accuracy of transcription. Masoretic Hebrew is an obscure language, which exists only in the realm of the Masoretic Text and the Talmud; consequently, the Masoretic Text itself is obscure and difficult of translation. One is forced to the con-

clusion that, until the advent of the printing press, the services of the Masorete were indispensable to preservation of the Masoretic Text. In view of these facts, it seems evident that, prior to the era of mechanized printing, the Church could not possibly have used and preserved the Masoretic Text. The Masoretic Hebrew Text is found in the so-called *polyglot* Bibles, published by Christians beginning about A. D. 1520. One of these Bibles, the London Polyglot (A. D. 1654–57) includes the Masoretic Text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Peshitta.

Behind the Scenes There remains, however, the question of how it came about, that a Canon of Scripture which, for a millennium or more, had been venerated as authentic and authoritative—a Canon written in a language which was widely understood—was suddenly laid aside in favor of a counterfeit written in an obscure tongue? Undoubtedly, the ‘official’ reason for the transition from the Septuagint to the Masoretic Text was a return to the ‘authentic’ and ‘original’ Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture. However, it appears more likely that the transition came about as a consequence of Talmudic influence within the realm of Roman catholicism. (The Protestant Reformation did not occur until the 16th century.) Neither can one rule out the possibility of bribery, threats, or blackmail, for much was at stake. Of course, the switch from the Septuagint to the Masoretic Text necessitated that the Jew be brought in to provide instruction in the Hebrew language, for, as previously noted, there were no known surviving Ancient Hebrew manuscripts to motivate study of the language. Thus did the Jew gain privileged access into the very heart of Christendom, from which realm he had so long by the providence of God been excluded. Through embrace of the Masoretic Text, the Church ensured the Jew a permanent role in Christendom, namely, that of ultimate authority regarding the Masoretic Hebrew language, and final arbiter regarding interpretation of the Masoretic Text.

V. Weighed in the Balances and Found Wanting

The Christian’s continuing and uncritical acceptance of the Masoretic text is, in large part, due to his ignorance concerning the origin, the heritage, and the nature of the Masorete, together with his failure to appreciate the ramifications of covenantal relationship with the Eternal.

1. The Prerequisites of Custodianship

Christians for the most part are oblivious to the correspondence between covenantal relationship with the Eternal and custodianship of the Canon of Scripture. The Old Covenant was a covenant of marriage, made between the Eternal and the nation Israel. Non-Israelites had no part in the covenant. The two parties entered into covenant at Mount Sinai, following the redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. The relationship continued despite the subsequent division of the nation into two kingdoms. We learn from the writings of the prophets that, following the division, the Eternal viewed Israel as a pair of sisters, simultaneously taken in marriage under identical covenantal relationships. Under the covenant, custodianship

of the Canon of Scripture resided with the Levitical priesthood, Deuteronomy 17:18 and Deuteronomy 31:9–11. The Levites were given no inheritance in the land, but rather, were scattered as ministers throughout the tribes of Israel. Inasmuch as the Canon of Old Covenant Scripture consists of the marriage contract between the Eternal and Israel, together with a chronicle of the relationship, it is unthinkable that custodianship of the Canon should ever pass outside of Israel. The covenantal relationship between the Eternal and the Northern Kingdom (which bore the name *Israel*) came to an end circa 721 B. C. The relationship was terminated by divorce, Jeremiah 3:8. The reason for divorce was idolatry, which, in the relationship between the Eternal and Israel, is tantamount to adultery. When the Eternal divorced the Northern Kingdom, the Levites residing in the Southern Kingdom (known as *Judah*) were left as the only legitimate custodians of the Canon of Scripture, Romans 3:1–2. Although some Christians are aware that the Northern Kingdom lost covenantal relationship with the Eternal, very few are aware that the covenantal relationship enjoyed by the Southern Kingdom also eventually came to an end. This is because few Christians understand that it is Christ Jesus—rather than God the Father—who is the God and husband of Israel. The covenantal relationship of marriage is dissolved by the death of either party to the covenant, Romans 7:2. With the death by crucifixion of Christ Jesus, Judah was left a widow. She lost not only her covenantal relationship with the Eternal, but also custodianship of the Canon of Scripture. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews notes that the prophecy of the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31:31–34, was also a notice of impending dissolution of the Old Covenant.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. 13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

– Hebrews 8:7–13

Many contemporary readers, teachers, and commentators consider the statement, “*Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away*”, to be prophetic of a still-future event. Quite to the contrary, the writer of Hebrews is pointing out the fact that it was on the very day in which Jeremiah uttered the prophecy that the Old Covenant decayed, waxed old, and was ready to vanish away. That is, when the Eternal announced through Jeremiah the coming New Covenant, he thereby made

the Old Covenant obsolescent. The New Covenant was instituted by the death Christ Jesus, who was the covenant sacrifice, Hebrews 9:15–17. The moment Jesus died, the New Covenant came into effect, and the Old Covenant vanished away.

With the resurrection of Christ Jesus, there was a change of priesthood. The Levitical priesthood came to an end upon dissolution of the Old Covenant. In its place, a new priesthood was instituted—a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, Hebrews 7:11–12, Hebrews 13:10. The Melchizedek priesthood is composed of Israelites who have entered a *new* covenantal relationship with the Eternal, under the terms of which they *all* are made priests, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9–10, Revelation 1:6, Revelation 5:10.

It is the Melchizedek priesthood which received custodianship of the Canon of Scripture. Moreover, the Melchizedek priesthood became custodian of the *entire* Canon of Scripture, both Old Covenant and New.

In Romans 3:1–2, the apostle Paul is simply recognizing the fact that, upon divorce of the Northern Kingdom, the Southern Kingdom (Judah) became sole custodian of the Canon of Old Covenant Scripture. The passage in no way implies that custodianship of the Canon remained with Judah following the death of Christ Jesus, nor that unregenerate Jews were at any time custodians of the Canon.

2. The Pedigree of the Masorete

The popular image of the Masorete is almost wholly detached from objective reality. The Masorete is portrayed as a pious man of highest integrity, having unfeigned and total devotion to accurate preservation of the Holy Writ, faithfully executing the duties of an office to which he is legitimate heir. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

Historians say of the Masorete that he is a Jewish scholar, purporting to be successor of the Scribe, and claiming a tradition going back to the time of Ezra. Whether, indeed, the Masoretic tradition began with Ezra is debatable, but it appears that the tradition was alive from the 5th century A. D. until at least the 9th or 10th century A. D., and that was during this period of the Christian era that the Masoretic Text came into being.

Inasmuch as the Old Covenant was dissolved by the death of Christ Jesus, the Masorete working in the Christian era could not claim relationship with the Eternal under terms of the *Old* Covenant. Being an unregenerate Jew (and there appears to be no reason for supposing the case was otherwise), the Masorete could not claim relationship with the Eternal under terms of the *New* Covenant. Thus, it is evident that the Masorete cannot possibly have been legitimate custodian of Old Covenant Scripture subsequent to the Crucifixion. These facts stand irrespective of the racial or national origin of the Masorete.

Although reference works generally identify the Masorete as a Jew, no tribal affiliation is specified. Thus, it is entirely possible that the Masorete was actually an Idumean Jew or another non-Israelite who is a proselyte to Talmudic Judaism. As has previously been discussed, the Masoretic Text appears in places to have been carefully edited, in order to excise messianic references while leaving intact the surrounding text. This fact of itself indicates that the Masorete, irrespective of his racial or

national origin, was unregenerate.

If the Masorete is an Israelite rejecting Christ Jesus as Messiah and God of Israel, then he is a liar, I John 2:22, and antiChrist, I John 2:18–23, II John 7. It is sure that such a one has no covenantal relationship with God; consider John 14:6 and I John 2:23.

3. The Heritage of the Masorete

The Masorete claims to be successor to the scribe. The term *scribe* refers to a office or status: scribes were the learned men who handled the Scriptures, both for transcription and for study. Thus, the teachers or *rabbim* were scribes. It was through the scribes that the oral tradition was developed—the unwritten body of doctrine which both Paul and Jesus termed, ‘the tradition of men’, Mark 7:8, Colossians 2:8. The oral tradition purported to expand the Law and to be essential to proper interpretation of the Law. The Babylonian Talmud is, essentially, the codification of the oral tradition, i.e., the oral tradition reduced to writing.

The term *Pharisee* refers to a member of one of the two principal sects of Judaism which were active at the time of the Incarnation, the other sect being that of the Sadducees. The Pharisees, reportedly numbering about six thousand, were predominant. The primary tenet of Pharisaism is acceptance of the oral tradition as counterpart or complement of the Scripture. Thus, from the standpoint of philosophy, the scribe and the Pharisee are one and the same. It should be noted that, according to contemporary Jewish authorities, the spirit of the Pharisee has survived unabated, and so-called Orthodox Judaism is simply modern-day Pharisaism.

Christ Jesus condemns the Pharisee and repeatedly warns of the leaven of the Pharisee.

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

– Matthew 23:13

5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. 8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? 9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? 12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

– Matthew 16:5–12

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his dis-

ciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

– Luke 12:1

It is imperative for the Christian to understand and keep in mind the fact that, with respect to doctrine, the Pharisee, the scribe, and the Masorete are one and the same: they are men of whom our Saviour has commanded us to be ware; men who are hypocrites; men who themselves do not enter into the kingdom of heaven and who seek to prevent other men from entering.

4. Extreme Reverence? or Utmost Contempt?

In the Masoretic Text, the God of Israel is frequently referred to by the word *YHWH*, which is known as the *Tetragrammaton*—the ‘word of four letters’. There is some disagreement concerning the derivation of the word; it appears to be doubling of the verb ‘to be’. Many scholars take *YHWH* to connote perfection of existence, in which case it should be translated ‘the Ever-Living’, ‘the Eternal’, ‘the Self-Existent One’, etc. Other scholars take *YHWH* to connote absolute sovereignty, in which case it should be translated ‘the Most High’, ‘the only Sovereign’, ‘the Only Potentate’, ‘the Only King’, etc. In the Greek of the Septuagint, the corresponding term is *o on*, which is translated ‘The Being’. (*on* is the present participle of *eimi*, which is the verb ‘to be’.)

The Masoretic word *YHWH* is commonly—and incorrectly—assumed to be the ‘personal name’ of God the Father. In reality, the Tetragrammaton is but one of many titles of God the Son, a fact which may be demonstrated from the Scripture in a number of ways.

Consider, for example, the reply the God of Israel makes to Moses from the burning bush, Exodus 3:14. In the English translation from the Masoretic Text, we read ‘*I AM who I AM*’. In the Greek of the Septuagint, Exodus 3:14 reads *ego eimi o on*, which is translated, ‘*I am the Being*’. Addressing the Pharisees, Christ Jesus says, “*If you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins*”, John 8:24, and “*Before Abraham came to be, I am*”, John 8:58. In both instances, Jesus uses the Greek phrase *ego eimi* (‘I am’), although he does not include the words *o on*. However, in Greek, it is common for a speaker or author, when citing material which is familiar to the listener or reader, to quote only a fragment. In view of the context of the discussion and the fact that the Pharisee was thoroughly familiar with the Greek text of the Septuagint, there is no doubt that the Pharisee correctly understood the words of Jesus to be a reference to Exodus 3:14.

The Masorete as an Unregenerate Jew According to popular tradition, the Masorete considered the name of the Eternal too sacred to pronounce. Consequently, when encountering *YHWH*, the Masorete supposedly pronounced instead the Masoretic word *ADONAY*, which means *lord* or *master*. The same tradition is followed by the contemporary Jew. Christians have generally seen this practice of the Masorete to be, at worst, a harmless superstition. Indeed, most Christians take the practice to be an indication that the Masorete is pious and devout—one who would in an instant convert to Christianity, if only he could somehow be convinced that Jesus is the Messiah.

However, when one considers the nature of the Masorete and the identity of the one to whom the title *YHWH* refers, the matter takes on an entirely new dimension. As previously noted, in ideology the Masorete is one and the same with the Pharisee. The parable of the wicked tenants, together with other passages of Scripture, testifies to the fact that the Pharisee knew that Christ Jesus was the Son of God. Consequently, there is an infinitely more plausible explanation for the refusal of the Masorete to pronounce *YHWH*: Like his evil predecessor the Pharisee, the Masorete perceived that *YHWH* represents Christ Jesus, and thus the Masorete held the word *YHWH* in utmost contempt.

VI. Restoration and Discovery

Having come to the realization that the Church for centuries has venerated a counterfeit Canon of Old Covenant Scripture, what is the Christian of this day to do? Obviously, the first step is to acknowledge the Septuagint as the authoritative Canon of Old Covenant Scripture, and then to procure an English translation of the Septuagint.

As this study is being revised in the winter of A. D. 2005, the author is aware of three translations of the Septuagint into English. One translation was made by Charles Thompson in 1808; the second was made by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton in 1844; the third is a contemporary effort which is currently in progress.

The translation by Brenton is found in an edition of the Septuagint originally published in A. D. 1851 in London by Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd. This edition has the Greek text set in a large font in a wide center column, with the English translation set in a small font in a narrow side column; it is *not* an interlinear Bible. At least two publishers currently offer facsimile reproductions of the Bagster edition.

An Internet web site is devoted to the translation currently in progress. The URL of the web site is <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/>

One barrier to popular acceptance of the Septuagint is the fact that English-language tools—concordances, lexicons, and analytical lexicons—designed for study of the Septuagint are not as numerous and not as readily available as are tools designed for study of the Masoretic Text. Although the Septuagint is written in the same language⁵ as is the Scripture of the New Covenant, most lexicons and concordances limit themselves to the scope of New Covenant Scripture. Also, few of the computerized concordances have provision for searching the Septuagint. However, in recent years there has been a sudden and significant increase in popular interest in the Septuagint, which is evidenced by an increase in sales of printed editions of the Septuagint. Undoubtedly, much of the interest in the Septuagint is due to the King-James-only campaigns which many Christian ministries have been waging in recent years. One argument which frequently is made in support of the King James version is that modern translations have increasingly taken into consideration the reading of the Septuagint. Ironically, apart from the King-James-only campaigns, most Christians would never have heard of the Septuagint.

Supplied with his own copy of the Septuagint and equipped

with the requisite English-language study tools, the Christian of this day has opened to him a vast field for exploration and discovery—a field of greatest importance, yet one which has been ignored for many centuries.

With the aid of the Septuagint, we may expect at long last to penetrate to the heart of matters which, by their very nature, cannot be resolved through study of the Masoretic Text.

The Septuagint is the God-given heritage of the Christian. Christendom foolishly laid aside this priceless possession and set in its place the corrupt Masoretic Text. Let us of this generation return the Septuagint to its rightful place as the authoritative Canon of Old Covenant Scripture, and let us begin in earnest to search its pages, and discover forgotten treasures of our heritage.

Russell L. Harris

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⁵The Koine dialect of Greek.

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*These, having put the world in commotion,
are also here present...and these all do contrary
to the decree of Caesar, saying another
to be king—Jesus.*

– Acts 17:6–7

We ought obey God rather than men.

– Acts 5:29
